A GROUP IN PROFILE, PAIN

Y TORONDO (18th century)

[*End paper*

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CONFESSIONS OF AN INCURABLE COLLECTOR

BOOKS BY DESMOND COKE

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THE CALL (1907)
THE PEDESTAL (1908)
THE GOLDEN KEY (1909)
BEAUTY FOR ASHES (1910)
THE CURE (1912)
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STORIES ABOUT BOYS:

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STORIES FOR BOYS:

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THE BENDING OF A TWIG (Revised Edition, 1908)
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THE NOUVEAU POOR (1921)
OUR MODERN YOUTH (1924)

BELLES LETTRES:

THE ART OF SILHOUETTE (1913)

THE INCURABLE COLLECTOR

[*Frontispiece*

CONFESSIONS OF AN INCURABLE COLLECTOR

BY

DESMOND COKE

LONDON : MCMXXVIII

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TO A MEMORY

"Un même penchant nous unit."

AUTHOR'S NOTE

As this book is frankly personal, I have decided, by no means unwillingly, to illustrate it from specimens in my own collection. I have, however, resisted the instinct to state this fact below each separate illustration.

The subjects, obviously, have not been chosen in every case for beauty, still less for their cost. They are to illustrate my main theme,—that the rich collector frequently gets less sport from his hobby than the humble connoisseur.

DESMOND COKE.

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CHAPTER I

MY CASE

THOSE scientific know-alls, who can create everything except Life and cure everything but Death, persist in telling us that the Collecting Instinct starts in youth with the hoarding of cigarette cards, crests and coins. Some of them, it is true, put forward a more continental explanation; but I utterly refuse to regard the pure delight of collecting as something unpleasantly abnormal. I prefer to look on the scientists themselves as freaks.

I have, in fact, long ago ceased arguing with science. There is no need: it so soon contradicts itself. One year it tells us to fill ourselves with currants, the next it picks them fussily out of our cake. Even in matters possibly more cosmic its assumption of cock-sureness is, I feel sure, terribly unscientific. How we lovers of old things delight in the simplicity of the sixteenth-century astronomers! How conceited to imagine that Man, 500 years on, will get less joy from what our dear Professors now call their "discoveries"! How he will love their potty little conception of the Universe!—provided only that any of our shoddy paper shall survive till then.

Why argue, however; why worry about universals? Does it really matter what gives men this collecting mania? Certainly it cannot always be a youthful indiscretion, for I myself, a case utterly incurable at forty-eight, never put two stamps, two crests or two cigarette

cards together in the whole length of my youth. At school I collected nothing ; indeed, I cannot remember that it was " done " at Shrewsbury, and we all know the strength of convention at a public school. At home, too, I was happy with what came along. My life was laid in pleasant places, as that of a soldier's son. Who, at Aldershot or at the Curragh, could worry with collecting ? True in three years at Dublin, when I was in my teens, I spent happy hours accompanying my mother—a life-long lover of old things—as she combed thoroughly the dirty shops, innocent of glass-front or of name, that then lined both banks of the Liffey. But I never bought anything, and, more strange (for she was the most generous of mothers), I never recall receiving any gift of this sort from her till much later, when I was in my twenties. Perhaps she knew the strength of this virus and wished to save me from it till I was big enough to bear it.

No, my case is clear, the symptoms definite. It was at Oxford I " got taken." Not only does an old snapshot of my room there prove me still to have believed in drapery as fireplace decoration ; it also shows my wall hung thick already with small colour-prints in oval frames (an early symptom, nearly always), Wedgwood plaques (another line of least resistance), and countless silhouettes. A page cut from an old copy of *The Isis*, showing a young me as " Isis Idol," describes me as an " eccentric " person who " dares " (at Oxford even) to " decorate his room with antiques," not with the accustomed freshers' joys. How happy I was—I see now, and luckily knew then—as I pottered, all alone, round the shops of kindly dealers, no doubt

A SERIOUS SYMPTOM

Centre of a bow-front curio-case, seen through open doors

PLATE I [*Facing p.* 2

delighted with so young a devotee, and revelled in the first sensation of overcoming something, of mastering a subject, of stamping philosophically on the inevitable "learner's fakes"! . . . Oh yes, long before I left Oxford luxury in favour of a Bayswater attic better suited to young authorship, I had the plague completely in my veins. The Boer War was being fought during those four years, and conscientiously I amassed a collection—"unique," I am convinced, but burnt later in the wise providence of Fate—which included every variety of flag button or tie-pin that the jingoistic wore, emblazoned with the faces of our generals, on the lapels of their patriotic coats. Do not suspect, please, that I thought, even then, these objects beautiful. No; it may have been, but very little if at all, the mere joy of amassing. Chiefly it was, I very well remember, a sincere belief that I expressed thus to amused elders: "Well, after all, how interesting it'd be now if we had a complete set of the same sort of things which we know *were* worn at the time of Waterloo!" A poisonous young man, yes. Doubtless there was much itching in the toes of elders. But sincerely, as I say, I was wanting so early to provide a priceless collection for some collector whose grandfather might be still unborn. It was a symptom; I must not conceal it. After all, men do plant mulberry trees; and I know someone not yet twenty-five, who in the same spirit collected and documented every newspaper, leaflet and news-bulletin that came out in those first chaotic days of the late General Strike.

And when I reached my Bayswater attic, where one could stand up only in the room's plumb centre; when

for three long-seeming years manuscripts returned with thanks from every editor in London ; when book-reviewing for five separate papers (oh, those ampler days !) alone made the attic even possible and prevented a tame return prodigally to my home and the parent-planned career,—do you imagine that even then I ceased from buying everything that was both good and cheap ? Do you imagine that, faced with the choice of a new shirt or a silhouette, of lunch or a good drawing, I was ever sensible or prudent ? If so, you are no collector.

But do not please stop reading. Everything else in these singularly unmysterious times has been explained by someone, but I am anxious, optimist that I have always been, to tell the world why men collect, why they enjoy it, why they will suffer the curses of bank managers, the lack of a car and other miseries, yet never dream—not for one disillusioned moment even—of giving up their hobby. I want to write frankly and simply, without affectation or any effort to be " lit'r'y," of what I myself have done and learnt. I hope to convince the general reader that a collector need not be the Professor Dryasdust of comic-strip fame ; that he deals with human subjects, subjects eternally alive ; and that it should not be a bore to read about them.

Don't laugh, for this is bound to be an egotistic book. I must write as I think, or else it will be nothing. And because, if it is indeed anything, it must be a sort of soul-revealing, I have called it, not in any cheap spirit, a " Confession." Such as this book is, so am I. If you dislike its manner you would hate me. But don't (I repeat) let us therefore part company before the end.

A DESPERATE REMEDY

Some back room must be frankly abandoned to inartistic over-crowding

PLATE 2

[*Facing p.* 4

Life isn't like that, God knows. A million married pairs attest it : so what use pretending ?

As to that manner, I am—I swear—a serious collector and student of my own queer subjects, but I have never been able to get the right words. The art-critic jargon and the museum pomposity appal me as a reader. Why then should I copy a style that always has defeated me before the word Finis ? Surely it is better to write as I feel moved, without reference to the effect, whether æsthetic or emetic, on my reader ?

At this point some may wonder why I am so much on the defensive in this matter. Let me make my first confession.

Some years ago, sooner than be left out of a pretentious fashion, I divided my books up under headings. " Novels," " Humour," " Belles Lettres "—you know the type of thing nowadays that faces or backs every title-page. It was a disappointment to me that, under the good-sounding " Belles Lettres " I could put, with any honesty, only one book, *The Art of Silhouette*, and I naturally asked myself why I had never followed this book, which Martin Secker published in 1913, with another like it. Even my resolve to be frank, absolutely frank, does not prevent me from feeling ashamed as I confess the reason ; yet I believe if we were all honest it would not seem very unusual, for most young humans have something sheep-like in them. The critics were kind to my book, to the knowledge in it, to the admirable illustrations, to the beautiful end-paper designed for it by Maxwell Ayrton (I can praise the book, since Mr. Secker wickedly but patriotically pulped it during

the war paper-shortage) ; and with all a writer's vanity I revelled in long, appreciative press-cuttings. Time passed and all this with it, except one word used by a reviewer, and that one word " quirky." " Mr. Desmond Coke's manner is a trifle quirky," I expect this reviewer wrote. He sped at me a good word, old and uncommon. It stuck tight. Whenever I contemplated this present book (and I have promised it myself for quite a dozen years) I said : " No, it will be quirky." Imagine ! One critic—one critic only of them all ; a human radish like ourselves ; probably married and forced to criticise if he would keep his wife—yet with the power, by one word, to put me off my enterprise. How wonderful indeed is Man !

Oh yes, I agree. Naturally I must have thought the word (so far as I understood it) just, or it would not have pricked me. So I went back to my novels, continued to satisfy my itch for writing by presenting " heroes " of fiction who displayed one side only of my quirky ego.

" Vanity, vanity . . ." With fifty well in sight—can it be possible ? —I shall not now change my spots, nor do I mind so much if they be seen of men. That was a sincere book, *The Art of Silhouette*, an honest endeavour to light up a little subject that I had studied thoroughly for years : and I wrote it sincerely. Let me do the same now and suffer the result in silence. If you find me quirky (maybe the war washed that out of me) believe that it is not put on ; that I am saying nothing for effect ; that I, too, dread the facetious as much as I hate the solemn ; that I am terribly afraid of boring, because fascinated by my subject ; that I can

write what I must write only if I quite forget what you will think of me.

From my window I can see, far below me at the Marble Arch, men and women who raise gesticulatory hands in strong desire to testify ; to tell less lucky people the faith that is in them, to pass on the happiness that they have found. The world calls them cranks. And I remember how a society woman who wandered inappropriately into my solitary lair, and saw my two drawers full of peep-shows and panoramas, murmured—not, try to believe, in irony—" You must be very happy . . . " She was a clever woman ; admit. Perhaps she was right. It is so hard to say how much pleasure exactly other people get from their special sort of life ; how far they are amused by their amusements. Perhaps the false-looking " gaiety " of night clubs is mere concealment of real happiness below it. Certainly I have been happy and amused with life, except when it has staged a tragic scene. Was she right ? Am I like those men and women that I see there below ? Have I too the wish to testify and maybe to convert ? Is their instinct lying hid somewhere far behind this book ?

CHAPTER II

THE TRUTH ABOUT COLLECTORS

"INCURABLE"? I think so. Fate, at least, has vainly made two big attempts to cure me. I have on my desk the documents that were her prescriptions.

"And you can take it," crisply ends the first in 1919 "that your goods are a total loss." The goods thus referred to included my whole collection (except for a few silhouettes that I kept in my mother's home at Horsham) up to the age of thirty-five. I had stored everything, on joining up in 1914, at Hudson's Depository, near Victoria Station. When the war was over and I was just drawing childish room-plans to show where everything would "go" in my first flat for five years, I opened a newspaper and saw "GREAT DEPOSITORY BLAZE." Later I received the letter of which I have quoted the last words. All my Oxford purchases and all that had been added since in London were totally destroyed. Sometimes still, with a hot feeling that collectors probably will understand, I suddenly remember something that thus went and had been forgotten during the long-seeming years of war. Always from nearly the start, I had abandoned prints, china, and all the obvious collections; buying only the uncommon object, the artist at that time unpopular, the thing made sentimentally with hands. Many wonderful Rowlandson water-colours were lapped up by the flames, notably the famous *Anatomy Class* and

two of the largest and finest drawings by him that I ever saw, of *Excavations at Bath ;* stump-work that had escaped since the Jacobean times ; two cabinet-loads of such choice trifles as nowadays——

But where is my philosophy ? What duller than to read of other people's losses ? As well write about health-symptoms. Let us see Fate's other document, then turn to gayer subjects. This one is a telegram, dated in the first week of this very year. It is from the Tate Gallery, which had borrowed fifty-nine of my Rowlandson drawings for a belated Centenary Exhibition of that neglected artist ; " Regret serious flood Tate Gallery Basement, everything possible being done." The Thames—annoyed, maybe by an artist who, more than most, celebrated her, being honoured in a basement gallery under artificial light--suddenly threw ten feet of icy flood-water over the exhibits. Fire and flood would teach the fool to be a collector.

It may be asked, by those immune from my mania, why I did not actually cease a pleasure that exposed me to such unpleasant shocks.

So far as the flood goes, my answer involves something of an anti-climax. The heroism of the director and all his assistants, aided by the fact, hitherto unsuspected, that water-colours will stand such rough treatment far more successfully than oils, finally restored my best drawings to me scarcely injured, Fate having relented sufficiently to damage nothing but the second-best. Moreover, the typical set of drawings lent formed, in any case, a part only of my whole collection. But the trial by fire was, I must admit, very near to making me despair. It seemed hopeless,

at thirty-nine and with antiques growing yearly scarcer, to start again from the beginning. What then gave me strength or—if you prefer it—took away my resolution? First, there were those few treasures, still safe at Horsham, as a tempting nucleus; then I remembered the firmness, in like circumstances but at a later age, of Lord Wolseley, excellent collector and hero of my youth. I was appalled by the idea of so-called pleasure or gaiety as my main pastime; I had totally lost the habit of even a small lunch: above all I was at the moment in the same house as a delightful Italian connoisseur, who travelled a loved Fragonard in his week-end suit-case and was horrified by my protective calm.

"But why do you not *weep?*" he asked me, again and again. "You are so *calm*. I do not understand. Why do you not—" (he gesticulated fiercely) "why do you not—*I* should tear my hair, I should remember this, that, the other treasure that was ruined. I should see them crackling in the flames. I think I should go mad. But *you*—" and so it all began again. He meant well, and indeed he helped me. That vision of beautiful objects—objects that were beautiful centuries before my birth, and should have been for centuries to come—that very vision of them "crackling" in the flames was what I had to fight against. The fear of it had given me the calmness which upset him. I put into *The Times* front page a short announcement thanking correspondents for sympathy and saying that I "hoped in time to make other collections." A few days later I bought the first of my Rowlandsons—the second, flooded, series!

THE "WALLENSTEIN" BOOK,

closed : showing open work in silver on gilt background

PLATE 3 [*Facing p.* 10

And why not? Apart from the problem of filling my life, what should I have hung upon my walls? Framed reproductions from the "Art Department" of women's shops? I had to face the problem of room-decoration.

There seems to me, tolerant though I try to be, a streak of lunacy in anybody who collects doggedly an object that is ugly. So many collectors bore and disgust their friends by rooms that have the air of a specialised museum, whilst all the time they are the very people whose knowledge should allow them the chance to bring off something harmonious in the way of decoration. What can be more depressing than three thousand specimens of any thing, however beautiful the first might be; what more pretentious and dismal than furniture set out, higgledy-piggledy, as *A* Collection, when it was planned for beauty and comfortable use?

Always the collector has two great dangers threatening not only the merit of his achievement but the very beauty of his home. These are the undying twin snobs, scarcity and size.

While I have been busy on this book a pother has upset our Press—always inclined to be rather too easily excited. It seemed anyhow, at first (for news nowadays is a chameleon, revising its shade with every fresh appearance), that there was a disastrous slump in the price of our great auks' eggs. My own evening paper headed this sad news, rather sweepingly, "DECLINE OF THE CURIO." Lord Rothschild it appeared, had bought a great auk's egg for £350, whereas its owner had asked £500 as a fair price for so big an

ornithological achievement. (Journalese begins, I see, to infect my style.) *Was* this a fair price of tradition, or wasn't it ? Hither and thither, foward and backward, raged the Homeric battle. Finally Lord Rothschild spoilt everything by writing with a quiet dignity to say that he had *not* recently bought an egg by a great auk ; that none had been " on the market " since the Soandso auction of some years ago ; that all the " eighty-odd " existing eggs had been codified by Mr. Someonelse ; and that £500, nay even £400 had not been ever paid for any of them.

Let no egg-expert think me narrow-minded from the manner in which I refer to this special matter. I have not, I confess frankly, studied the points of an auk's egg. I do not know whether the value of any given specimen resides in the patina upon its surface, the exact grace of its stream-line, the neatness of its blow-hole, or some recorded rapidity of production. True, I once saw such an egg, and even handled it : but I am sure it had no charm of colour or of texture, for I should have remembered that. I recall only a bleak exaggeration, as of a nightmare after over-eating hen-eggs. I cannot believe that the " eighty-odd " existing eggs have any variety of charm among themselves, or that if an island were discovered with eighty-odd thousand auk's eggs on it, they would—at any rate when blown—be worth more than five-pence, much less those five hundred pounds. If I am wrong, perhaps some collector will tell me what there actually is in a blown great auk's egg (or a great auk's blown egg) beyond rarity and bigness.

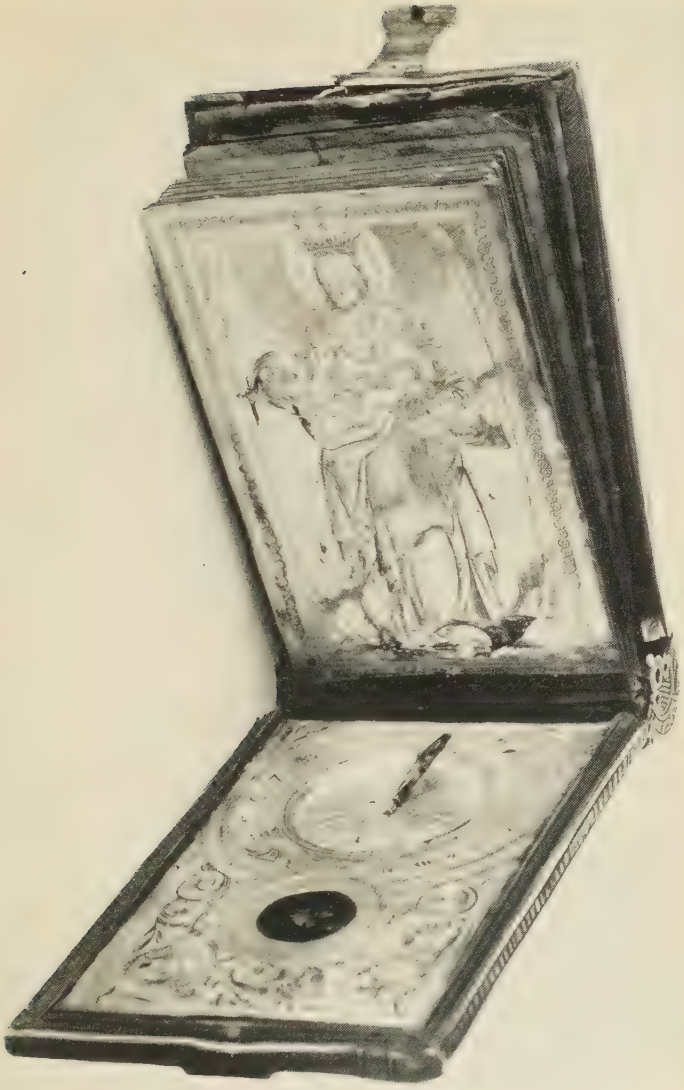
Next to such camphor-scented abominations of the

seaside free library and museum I should place the alleged historic relic : a handkerchief used by Canute, old Blucher's boots, and all the rest of them. Apart from ugliness, these objects are for the most part of no historical importance whatever. Blucher scattered boots across the continent of Europe. (About Canute, I confess I yielded to alliteration, which pleases me far more than history.) Only a man with the mentality of Grock, of Grock as he blithers delightedly about the stage, could really believe in the faded label attached to these relics. Even " King Charles I.'s chair," acquired lately by the Victoria and Albert Museum, has had its claims very badly shaken, I think fatally, by a writer in *The Connoisseur* (April, 1928), who proves that quite a different one was actually used at that unhappy monarch's trial. A collector of any experience soon learns that no value must be set upon inscriptions, and hardly more on family traditions. I have in my cabinet, although the youngest child of seven, one family heirloom complete with history : though it came, of course, not from my father but through my mother's family. It is an exquisite silver pocket-book, stumpy and thick, with covers of fine pierced sixteenth-century silver-work, containing the usual squirrels, roses, and so on of that period, all cut out in silver, thin almost as paper, shown up against gilt. In the four inside covers, so to speak, there are a Virgin, a silver-framed mirror, a compass, sundial, a miniature of a man finely carried out in oils. In the centre are eighteen writing-tablets of thick yellow ivory.

Now that this booklet was picked up on a battle-

field of the Netherlands by a FitzGerald, (I do not improve upon this pleasant synonym for looting) is of little interest, though an established fact. The story, however, does not end there. This book has been handed down, always, as " the Wallenstein book," and that, if true, distinctly is of interest. But *is* it ? I have no reason to believe so, or to doubt. I see no reason why it should be, unless my fierce Irish ancestor, as he transfixed his looted foe, asked, with a dentist's I-fear-I'm-going-to-hurt-you smile, " Oh, by the way, sir, what's your *name* ? " and got back a gasped " Wallenstein." But even then, could one believe the man ? He might have had his last revenge by starting falsehood in an alien home. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. . . . . Still, to me also this book, however much I may find weak spots in the story, remains by long association Wallenstein's.

Mr. Bohun Lynch, too—novelist, ex-champion as boxer, caricaturist, collector after my own heart—has recently confessed in print to an exploded legend of this sort. He wrote, (and I remember reading) an article in *The Connoisseur* (June, 1913) about a pocket book—not silver, this time, but extremely choice, " bound in red morocco, exquisitely tooled, and fastened by a small silver clasp." The ownership of this book could be traced with certainty for some 125 years, and " the owner of that date had inherited it from a Scotch family with which she and I " (Mr. Lynch) " were both connected . . . and of which an earlier member was alleged to have been in the Scotts Guairdse " (which the book concerns) " when that regiment was formed, and to have owned the book,"



THE "WALLENSTEIN" BOOK,

open: showing Virgin, sundial-compass, and date "ANNO 1600"

PLATE 4 [*Facing p.* 14

1688 to 1691. Now all this a younger and less wise Mr. Lynch set down as fact, boldly putting the name of this officer in print. Imagine his dismay when an eminent Scottish antiquary, though delighted with the hand-written and hitherto unknown information about the Scots Guards, was able to inform Mr. Lynch in turn that no such officer had served in that regiment during the period in question ! So died yet one more family tradition.

The case of these two booklets, however, is moderately simple, for they themselves are at least genuine, however true or false the legend that has grown around them. What are we to think of the very common case where we are told that a certain object " has been in the family two hundred years," yet water-mark, workmanship, or other proof beyond dispute, convinces us utterly that it is, on the contrary, a modern fake ? Let us not, at all events, be cynical. Delightful people who do not even want to sell spin us the tale with faith and pride radiant in every feature. What can we make of it ? We cannot make anything. Art, not psychology, is our affair. . . . Wiser to pass on to another subject, with the mere warning — how necessary, all collectors know—never to be guided by inscription, legend or family tradition, but always to rely on facts interpreted by knowledge.

Perhaps it is rash to mention knowledge, for that inevitably sounds dull to the youthful ear, and already we are told, by those who should know, that the young, preferring cars and other faster pleasures, are ceasing to collect. If so, it is a pity and the loss is theirs. No man can learn this pleasure late in life, yet it is among the

few that last beyond youth ; increase (as we shall see presently) with age ; and indeed make youthfulness eternal, not by a grisly pulling in of waists, but by a prolonging of real interest and joy in every work-free moment of each day. The collector is always met with something new ; he never reaches that trying moment which comes to every man of pleasure—the moment when he has to admit, even to himself, that his amusements are a bore, that prolonged gaiety is a grim task indeed.

Every man, I freely admit, must find his own amusements, but let him see that they amuse him. The world just now is full of grousers—people with no interest outside themselves. Let these, I urge, collect something. If men are happy collecting duchesses or dance invitations I have no word to say, except to repeat that these things do not last. If a man choose to live more excitingly, to collect mistresses or medals, again I merely ask him : Is he happy and can he really keep it up ? Retirement is the end of everything when it involves one's hobby. The man who collects antiques (that vile word must stand for want of a better) is always overdrawn, but no day is long enough for all he has to do.

It must not be thought, though it too often is, that the collector's only joy is in the actual buying. When he has got his purchase (and no true collector will let it be sent—he will bear it home below his arm) the real fun is only just beginning. There is the closer inspection than was possible ; the showing to a fellow expert (spare your other friends) ; the choice—and making—of a place to put it. If this calls for the rehanging of

half a room, bliss is indeed enlarged : and if the whole room has to move round, joy is at last complete.

This, by an obvious connection, leads me to another subject.

I have not yet seen recorded what I take to be a fact : that most of the greatest collections have been formed by bachelors.

The cynic, a fellow whom I hate for his cocksure slashing, will smile here and provide to himself half a dozen reasons. Married men cannot " afford " to buy antiques ; wives " won't allow lumber "—how stale it all is, how it stinks of *Ally Sloper* and the other penny comics that we enjoyed in childhood ; how far away it lies from Truth ! One can see this imaginary collector turned benedick, now known everywhere as " Mr. Henpeck " ; can hear his shrill-voiced shrew-wife who nags at him from bed to sell his Canaletto, whilst all the time he can scarcely stand, much less protect his property, poor wretch, so tired is he of bills for spring hats and of bearing a squalling baby up and down the bedroom. . . . Life must be splendidly simple for tame cynics.

It is not possible to accept, on closer view, an explanation that seems at first more plausible and subtle : that bachelors are selfish, spend more upon themselves. In the first place, as I have already hinted, the whole question of financial wisdom, even of seeming possibility, is alien from the true collector. Not his the petty balancing, with set weights, of other men. When the real thing, the object he " *must* " have, is offered him, everything—comfort, luxury, even necessary food —gives way to it. I need not elaborate this point. It

will be obvious to all collectors ; incredible to any other type of man. Fifteen years ago I wrote in *The Art of Silhouette :* " It is a popular fallacy that the collector must be a rich man. As a matter of contrary fact, it has been shown already that, if he is worth his salt, he never has a penny. But, sophistry apart, the real collector has no need for any special income. He spends no more upon his hobby than other men on theirs, whether horses, wine or taxis. He simply must adjust the choice of subject to his means." (O, stern, optimistic Youth ! As though one did not collect always the thing that one just can't afford. A thousand bank-books testify to this.) " The collector is the happiest —if the poorest—of God's creatures. He is the poorest because, if some miraculous twist of the wheel made him a millionaire to-morrow, he would merely collect elephants instead of silhouettes and never have the cash to pay for all of them." That last paragraph, I see, vindicates my youthful wisdom. Fifteen years have brought me a far bigger income ; a more frequent overdraft at my bank. . . . Absurd to say that married men cannot afford collecting ! Collectors cannot afford marriage.

This may seem to lead back to the charge of selfishness : and we must return, as men should more often, to the great wisdom of Francis Bacon, that calm and deep philosopher of life yesterday, to-day and for ever.

" He that hath a wife and children hath given hostages to fortune : for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men : which,

PROFILE OF A BOY,

painted on composition by S. Houghton. Late 18th century

PLATE 5

[*Facing p.* 18

both in affection and means, have married and endowed the public. . . . Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants. . . . Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity : and single men, though they be many times more charitable because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other hand, they are more cruel and hard-hearted (good to make severe inquisitors) because their tenderness is not so oft called upon." . . .

Had the essay " Of Marriage and Single Life " been quoted less freely by others, it would be a sin thus to cut and mangle so impartial a survey of the matter : but I am after one point only that emerges from it. Bacon had a sympathy that went far beyond the alleged scientists of modern " psychology " : his thoughts on friendship will outlast them all in spiritual comfort : and he could see, from his peaceful heights, that there is a use for married men, but also a use for bachelors of either sex. Probably among those uses we may rightly set, as he did four centuries ago, the helping of life's unattached and the gathering, for public benefit, of great collections. Yes, public benefit : for without collectors Beauty would long ago have perished off the earth, neglected, broken, unrestored.

If I seem to become a trifle tedious about this let me advance my argument a step further, and incidentally amuse the married, by giving here a bachelor's impression about married life.

Marriages may be divided into three classes. They may also be divided, and more truly, into as many classes as there are married couples. This reflection, however, is true also of people and would abolish the

great sport of classifying. Let me therefore give my three, and hope that you may grant there is some truth in them before I use them for my argument.

First, in despite of our cynic, there are the happy marriages, men and women who seem to have been born for each other—delicious lovers ; devoted parents till the children scatter ; perfect companions in later years ; understanding each other's wants without the need of words ; sensitive, unselfish, humorous and tender ; friends in all the good senses of that misused word. Secondly, there come the marriages that are a mess but very well repaired, with frequent absence as the best cement, or else admitted a disaster and hastily abandoned, with jettison even of children they have brought to birth. And in between these lie (so runs the theory of this onlooker) far commonest of all though few couples would admit that fact, the marriages where both are rather bored—time dragging, nerves scarlet, every day the same till death them decide to part—and yet all suffered gladly, even (as the years pass) with a growing sense of comfort, because each gets a background to life, something solid, a refuge from that dread to which neither would probably confess—the great primæval dread of solitude. . . .

Now that dread can hardly be understood by the collector. Lonely, idle ? He prays for solitude : he has so much to do. That catalogue of his collection, which he planned in the twenties, is now put off till the seventies. When he is too old in body, he tells himself, to dash round shops and sale-rooms, or even to totter round them with a stick to help, that—now !—will be the time to sit at home and start the famous

catalogue. . . . Meanwhile, if he could only find one moment, he longs to rearrange that cabinet and get the celadon all on one shelf : it looks miserable mixed with the tsuba. Then there are the drawings that need better mounts or frames. His job, his hobby, his rooms—what time, what place even, is there for marriage ?

Personally, having only a Flat as residence, I go further. I move not only the contents of the cabinet, I move the cabinet itself. I move everything, furniture and pictures, around it and above. Suddenly, nor yet seldom, there goes forth the order, " Move ! " My henchman (luckily an ex-soldier, well used to irrational orders and thus remaining faithful as well as undismayed) leaps to his post. Pictures pile themselves against the wall ; furniture blocks the carpet ; I lift great weights, against all orders from my doctor since the war ; this hermit's quiet flat echoes with sounds of hammer upon nail ; for once he is revenged upon his neighbours' pianos, children, dogs and ukuleles ; he enjoys all the confusion of a married home. The uses even of the rooms are altered. Guests arriving for the evening meal are amazed to find themselves dining, no longer under well-spaced oils by Nash and over the wide spaces of Hyde Park, but above the disreputable Edgware Road and under a regiment of silhouettes.

I submit that such upheavals, stirring as they do the pool of life and countering stagnation, not only keep old age at bay but are far less exhausting than a change of wives.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO COLLECT—DULLY !

EVERY month must see at least half a dozen articles, either in magazines or else upon a woman's page, telling beginners how they should collect. I have not one word to say against these columns, even less against the books that set forth how to collect one given subject. There is often much good technical advice within them. The books by Sir James Yoxall are particularly happy in being able to describe the points by which a collector judges furniture or china. But I have one strong objection to the more general advice usually given by publishers or Press. It is far too timid, too conventional. They leave out the fun.

Roughly, their idea seems this : There are certain things you may and should collect ; the things, in short, that everybody always has collected. There is china, and they tell you how to differentiate between sorts of paste ; there is glass, and you are instructed how to ring it ; there is furniture, and you learn (possibly . . .) how to detect the piece that has been patched or doctored. There are also mezzotints, enamels, tapestries, miniatures, clocks, pewter, lace, coloured prints, silver, books of hours, and etchings, and maybe half a dozen other fit subjects for collection. These are, if cash allows, Old Masters and portraits in oil. " Choose," they say, amply, " choose one of

these, for you must specialise. Everything is known about your subject, and we will tell you all we can." Modestly they admit that even so the beginner will have to buy his experience ; though, in the last such article I read, he was advised to avoid this by " always asking for a signed guarantee " that he had got a genuine antique.

What could be more dull, more chilly ? The miserable man or woman is at once put in a position where the dealer is accepted as an omniscient superior. I can not resist quoting further from the same article, though I will spare the author's blushes and not give its source, an admirable weekly paper :

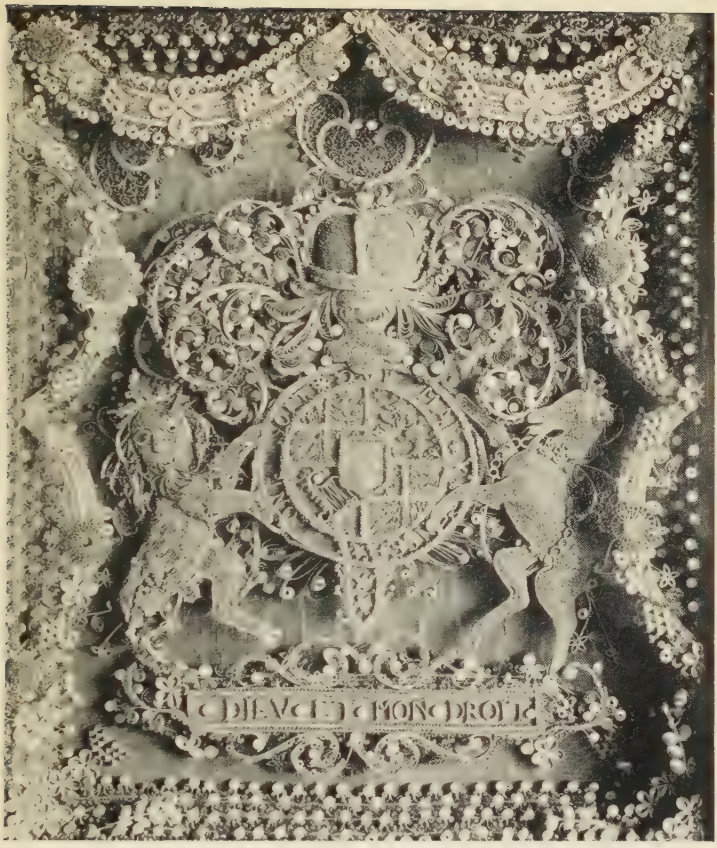
" The best thing to do when you think you have found a ' bargain ' at a place you know nothing about is to ask them to hold it for you till the next day—say you must show it to some imaginary relative, if necessary—and to go at once to look at similar pieces of furniture in reputable and very expensive antique galleries. Not so much as a guide to the price (you soon pick up a working knowledge of prices), but as a guide to the genuineness and value of your discovery. Note all the features the salesman at the famous gallery will draw your attention to, as proof of period or as special recommendations. When you have found out as much as you can remember, hasten back and compare it with your find. This is the way to develop real knowledge.

Hunting about from place to place comparing pieces is, I know, a lot of trouble. It is honestly, however, *the only way in which you can acquire real ' flair.'* And the more you learn the more you will realise that it pays to deal with a good firm. There are plenty of them."

This is, I admit, good—almost desolating—commonsense, if one admits (and I do not) that any beginner could thus carry the points in his head and so detect a skilful forger, but it takes all interest out of collecting. What chance would anybody, working along those lines, ever have of learning more about his own subject than the dealers ? This asking for signed guaran-

tees has always seemed to me an admission of weakness by the buyer, an insult and unfair temptation to the seller. Besides, collecting is an Art. Do not let us level it with the ingenious industries of those who get their library lists from the booksellers' windows, their hat-inspirations from the smart milliners' display! Sooner than this, I would (if there must really be advice?) say to the beginner: "Get to know the fakes by sight: then always buy the 'good'-looking thing that you have never seen before. Treat the dealer nicely; almost certainly he is a charming person or he would not have taken up this special trade; but do not lean upon the wretched man. His job is to sell; not to help you buy. If he has 'no idea what it is worth,' walk out: there are so many dealers of more honesty, who know. If he'd 'rather not sell,' do not press him; say, as you shut his door from the outside, that he should open a museum. Mistrust 'bargains' in cathedral towns and other tourist centres. Don't think everyone a fool except yourself. If tempted to be subtle with the dealer, remember it was written a long time ago: '*It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone apart, he boasteth*,' and probably the dealer knows it, too. In fact, when you have found this (*Proverbs* xx. 14), turn up the yet more bracing *Ecclesiasticus* and read, with care, xxii. 8 and 11."

Naturally such advice is not intended for the millionaire. He will not, in the first place, read this modest work: and his employment of a buying agent robs him, in the second, of all fun. But here, too, the same principle would hold. "Do not," I say, if even one such reads me, "do not listen to the dealer. Do



ROYAL COAT OF ARMS

in rolled paper (15½ in. × 13), a fine example in gold, green, and faded red. Size : 15½ in. × 13. Late 17th century

PLATE 6 [*Facing p.* 24

not let him force you into buying nothing but enormous oils. Tell him you are a human being, not a museum on two feet. Say you want a house to live in. Be bold. Start on something new. Buy Moderns. Have a lark. You can easily afford it. Take an example from the late Lord Carmichael: his admirable catholicity; his insistence on beauty above cost or rareness; his wonderful collection that was sold at Sotheby's two years ago, even after much had gone to the museums. Don't bother about giving £1,550, as someone did four years ago, for the first issue of *An Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard*. Gray published it in 1751 at sixpence. Woolworth, I daresay, does the same in 1928. Hundreds of beautiful editions have been published in between. If you want to spend a lot on Gray, go for the manuscript. *That* has a personal joy all its own: and there is no risk, as with the other, that a whole parcel full of them might yet turn up in an attic. Besides the manuscript is safely lodged, for £200, in the library at Eton; so you can keep your money to buy something that you really like and haven't been told that you ought to."

But what's the use?

This brief and appropriately dull chapter is, in fact, a mere prelude to one in which I hope optimistically to explain the real sport of collecting. I do not mean, however, to give advice. Collectors need only enthusiasm, and then experience. The truth of the whole matter is that people cannot be taught how to collect. They can be warned not to. But there, too, what's the use? As well warn people to avoid the measles. If its coming to you, be sure you will get it.

CHAPTER IV

COLLECTING AS A SPORT

THE ambition of every young Briton is to be a sportsman.

If war is, as seems, still the real end of all statesmanship, no nation since old Sparta has been more happily inspired in its ideal. Sparta's possibly was better, for with the same hardiness it managed to combine more breadth. Sport, as seen by Britons, is rather parochial. The Rugger man despises Soccer as a tout's game : the Soccer crowd scorns Rugger as an unskilled hobby of the " torfs." Many sports (for the word by now is used everywhere to mean mere games) demand big incomes : others are too narrow in their application. There ought, for instance, to be not only the excellent boat-race between Oxford and Cambridge, but also one between Wapping and Hampstead. There ought, much more, to be one between Wapping and Oxford, Cambridge and West Hampstead.

Not to indulge further in such Utopian ideas (for we are still amazing snobs and doggedly persist in making fodder for our dear " Class-war " agitators) I merely want to reach the first obvious disadvantage of Sport—however admirable in youth—when chosen as a lifelong hobby. It inclines to shut a man too much among his equals and so make him narrow. It is not simply that he meets, in his leisure, nobody but athletes. That might do no harm, beyond making him take his

HORSE-FAIR AT SOUTHAMPTON,

by Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827). All this artist's work suffers greatly in reproduction by loss of its gay yet gentle colours, but here the free line and the pleasant triangular design survive. Size : 16 in. × 8

PLATE 7

[*Facing p.* 26

amusements a little seriously for pure pleasure. The trouble is, rather, that he finds himself thrown against those only who excel in, or can afford, his special form of sport. Whether he shoot, fish, hunt ; whether he play tennis, fives or rugger ; whatever he takes up—unless perhaps boxing, village cricket, or the unfashionable soccer—the result can only be the same. As he goes about practising his hobby, he is locked permanently in a class compartment. It is, I imagine, for this very reason that my own school and a few others—very few—cling to soccer in spite of the indignant Old Boy who " can't get a game " (supply, as grammar text-books say, " in his own class " . . .).

This, the first drawback to sport with its inevitably narrowing effect, does not apply to the hobby of Collecting, which brings one up, with a common interest strongly shared, against delightful people in every walk of life. " I may say," writes a plasterer, in sending me something for which I had advertised recently in *The Bazaar*, " I am a collector myself. I find it a nice recreation after business. I am often at sales and have a large circle of shops I go to where they get things for me, prints and books. I specialise in Toby jugs these twenty-five years. I have a nice case full, one 153 years old. I find collecting is awfully interesting. I may easily come across what you're after in my circle, and it would be a pleasure to inform you."

Another drawback against sport, still from the viewpoint merely of enduring pleasure, is that one is best at it in youth and steadily declines after a certain age. This surely is unphilosophic ? In middle age a man needs more resources than to boast of past skill at games

and slowly turn into an avoided bore. It is no encouragement for him to have had a hobby which now makes him feel that he is past his prime ; that younger men are all the time outstripping him ; that he is a back-number. There is, it seems to me, a period at which the wise man should gracefully abandon sport as his chief god and stroll into another temple. (I feel that the metaphor here should have been a change of horses ; but let it stand !) Probably that change should not be delayed. In most cases it is never made. The sportsman remains, mentally, an eternal boy, and that is as a mercy to him : but physically he gets fat and wind-less ; his prowess goes ; he is a legend, a mere man that was.

How opposite is the collector's lot ! In youth (when he has his games and sports no less than anybody else) he is, it is true, everybody's victim ; ignorant ; a learner—possibly a great man in games, winning his school caps and so on, but a mug utter in collecting. When the skill at sport, the slim belly, the schoolboy complexion, and all the rest are going, he suddenly awakes to a new confidence. Just as at school he found himself—abruptly, it seemed and mysteriously—one of the big boys, a someone in the House, so does he now find, in an apparent flash, that he knows more of his own subject than the dealers, that he is that hitherto-vile thing, an expert, that he can risk his judgment and find it pulls him through, that he has found a fresh delight in life. Just at a time when games had begun to be a strain, dances a nuisance, love a duty, society a stiff-shirted bore, some kind destiny has given him an all-replacing interest. He simply cannot understand

those other men of his own age who sit about in hot clubs moaning for their youth and its sport-permitting wind. He is just getting into his own stride. He never was so happy in his life before.

Yet, though every school has experts to teach the great but too brief joy of sport, how many give their pupils even a single lesson in the delight of Art, or in that life-long game, collecting ?

One moment ! I have used the word ; I have implied that collecting should rank as a sport ; and all the games-men are instantly in arms. But why ? Will they not admit that " Sport " is a word which has gone most decidedly down hill ? I myself, as a lover of language, should prefer that it kept its own sense : but this would rule out the games-players themselves. Long since, they have all been sportsmen. More recently we have seen dog-racing described as a sport, though men take no part in it save for the 29-minute betting that follows on the 30-second race. Last week I read an advertisement headed in capitals, " THE NEW SPORT THAT HAS SWEPT AMERICA ! " It urged the world, by free quotation of *The Sport of Kings*, to go riding on a padded spring-horse and so be rid, in the very bedroom, of obesity. I hope to put up a better claim for collecting to rank as a new sport.

That health horse, for one thing, was said to be safe : and I take risk to be an essential, attractive, element in every sport. That, certainly, exists in collecting : not merely from fire and flood (as I have shown) but from fakers and all the foes that lurk to attack beginners. Moreover, this sport is, as it should be, a healthy open-

air affair. There are those, I know, who collect from an arm-chair or a Rolls Royce : but I rule them out. The true collector must travel on foot or a bus-top. Even a taxi will hamper him too much. He must explore the byeways : he will want to potter. The only good collecting that I ever did indoors was when I set out to see how many of the excellent drawings reproduced in Mr. Oppé's book on Rowlandson I could lure by skilful correspondence from their owners. I managed to buy eight of them : and that I look on as good fishing. Then, for many of those who now claim to be sportsmen, it is surely an inducement that, as collectors, they will be free to back their fancies to any extent without bye-laws or taxation. They must not heed that old wet-blanket Pope, who cannot have been a collector when he wrote

> Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

They must put, if they follow my system, all their money and possibly their shirts on a fancy that nobody has cared about till now. They must do this bravely, reckoning that England is a little country, that she stocks half the world with antiques, that breakages occur in the best households, that everything gets scarcer, that prices certainly will rise. (I speak in sordid terms, for these backers are not philanthropists by nature.) They must at all costs avoid the favourite and back an absolute outsider. When I first arrived in London, I shared digs with a man who was in the City, called himself a sportsman and had great ambitions as to making money. He talked so much of this that finally I was moved to a suggestion.

EARLY VICTORIAN MUSICAL BOX

Dancing figures on a bemirrored stage (9 in. × 7 (stage) by 6 in. deep). Figures and all the works, except music roll, are wooden

PLATE 8 [*Facing p.* 30

" There are," I said to this man, twenty-four years back, " things called silhouettes. They aren't cut: they're painted on ivory or glass or plaster. They're very good. At least, I think so. The dealers don't—not unless they're set in pearls, and then they charge only for the setting. As a rule they scrap the ordinary ones for the sake of their frames, which they call " miniature frames " for some obscure trade reason. These silhouettes are about the only choice thing of the eighteenth century that hasn't been collected. I buy all I can, not above five shillings, in small shops; (the big ones snort, if you go in and ask ;) but I've jolly few five shillingses. You say you want to invest money and make a big profit? Well, put down five hundred pounds and I'll give my time free—I enjoy it—and make a corner in these silhouettes. They're very brittle, and the dealers smash them up by hundreds for the frames. I guarantee you'll make, in five years, a profit of hundreds per cent."

But would he? No, it wasn't an " ordinary investment." I sank lower, seeking to fit myself to more usual standards. I swore that, if necessary, I would boom these objects in a book and so force up the price. Even that last phrase, which I had thought convincing local colour, failed. The story is absolutely true; the man, I still say, no sportsman.

It makes no difference, however, if the word sport be allowed to the long dogs and denied to the unfortunate collector, even though he buy books as they come out and pictures red-hot from the painter. I may still use it in its other dictionary sense: " (2) Amusement or entertainment which a person receives from

something ; fun or enjoyment experienced ; diversion." What amusement, entertainment, fun, enjoyment, diversion, and good sport it is, on a fine day, to set out on an antique-hunting expedition ! Not along Bond Street, God forbid (to say nothing of one's banker), but after elaborate sifting of productive places. Wardour Street has sunk from even largely faked antiques to being an annexe of Los Angeles : and there is, unless Petty France, no central successor. The hunter, nowadays, must go farther afield. Even that Friday-morning joy of long ago, the Caledonian Market, is practically useless except for very humble yet skilful connoisseurs. The good old days are over, there at any rate. Society with a big S has found it, and rolls up at midday in its limousines. Even at ten o'clock, when that old exciting rush succeeds the opening of its doors, very different stuff is thrown upon the cobble-stones as a reward for early-comers : and half the small dealers of London, even so, dash round for a first look at it. The place has been wildly exploited.

Perhaps I was, in part, myself to blame. It must be a full twenty years since, full of my new joy in this weekly pilgrimage, I wrote at some length about it in *The Windsor Magazine*, under the title of " The Bargain Rummagers." The subject was congenial ; a cheque welcome ; collectors were amused. But though I hid my enthusiasm under both Satire and Fiction, I found that people asked me whether it was really worth going to ; others said they meant to try ; the poison slowly spread. The rumour that it was, romantically, " a thieves' market " completed the disaster. I seldom go, now, to the Caledonian Market : and should

another start elsewhere, I shall not write an article about it.

The choice is more restricted now : but it remains. St. John's Wood, starting from the top of Baker Street and thus including Park Road, nor ceasing till you reach, by change of buses, Finchley Road and West End Lane ; the back-streets of Paddington and Notting Hill ; out-lying Croydon, or the more pleasant Richmond—collectors soon learn where the little shops still cluster. It is a pity that, in the march of progress as shown by organisation, these small dealers have learnt to put aside their best things, deep in a secret drawer, till the big dealers come from the West End. It is not in the interest of old collectors ; it does not encourage new ones ; but, as the culprits truly say, " the big dealers wouldn't come again unless we showed them something, and so there we are." West End dealers are the bane, equally, of all important country auctions. Even a few lots of antiques, among a house-load of modern rubbish, will draw a swarm of them one hundred miles from London. This known fact should be well chewed by those who dispute the scarcity of really old things or believe that the present supply will last, by some miracle, for ever.

The hunting-place, however, is not so important, for good sport, as knowing how to hunt.

Am I, after all, verging on advice ? It would seem so : but, honestly, only with a sincere hope that nobody may take it. Each man or woman must work out a private method of collecting. If I give mine, it is only for criticism and improvement by each reader, and because, after experience, I find that it has given me more fun and

interest and joy of life than have been gained by anyone in my acquaintance who has followed the set lines of conventional collecting. Roughly, then, I lay down my system thus, for those to follow who can find no better :—

(1) For decoration and to avoid the monotony of most collectors' houses, buy cheaply, on such excursions as I have described, anything that is beautiful (not just pretty) and of an age to give it restfulness (say, before 1750). Thus you may fill a cabinet reposefully. With one proviso—that you avoid the fussy, meretricious-costly, or bright-coloured object—the more you put into your cabinets the better their effect. But they themselves must be beautiful and at all costs escape the look of museum cases. Above all, anything that demands a glass cover to itself, if really there be such a thing at all, must be ardently resisted. As to the walls, chance is sure, at some time, to send you at least two big pictures of fine quality. (I picked up, literally " for the price of its frame " (carved), a Rembrandtesque self-portrait by Opie, very mellow : and, less cheaply, an attractive Kit-Kat portrait in oils of a half-smiling girl, probably by Beach or some other of Reynolds' best pupils.) Do not allow, however much you may be tempted, the walls of your sitting-room to get spotted with pictures. Leave this as a pleasant oasis for visitors without your monomania. A few oddments—a pleasantly subdued stump needle-work and so on, nothing white or garish—spaced cleverly upon a painted wall, will make a background to your furniture and win praise as " so restful " even from those who usually abominate antiques.

(2) As a connoisseur (and possibly also for invest-

STUMP-WORK

Adam and Eve, as usual, in Stuart costume. Countless stitches go to make each apple

PLATE 9

[*Facing p.* 34

ment, if of prudent mind) choose one subject, by no means hackneyed or explored, that you intend to make your own. If, as the years pass, this becomes too popular or circumscribed, add one more to it : but not a third. There is nothing so absurd as the universal expert. Two subjects will fill up your spare time for life. (I took Rowlandson and Silhouette in my early twenties. I am now forty-eight. I still learn about each every year.) Now *buy*. Do not be weak and buy every specimen you see. Avoid cheap rubbish. Leave the damaged to its inevitable fate. Buy the best specimen, wherever it occurs and at whatever price. If the financial crisis become too acute, sell, in expensive places, the worst specimens that will fetch what you need : but do not miss the choicest specimens. They are what redeem the others. I may shock moralists when I declare that of all the good advice my mother no doubt gave me I remember best : " It'll be only the things you resist that you'll ever regret." This may seem a bromide : it is really a great truth of collecting. I remember Hugh Walpole, a collector of praiseworthy enterprise, tea-ing with me an hour after he had bought, at one of Max Beerbohm's shows some years ago, the whole set of his pre-Raphaelite cartoons. I quoted this saying as some reassurance, for well I know the sensation when one has seemed to over-buy. Last month Hugh Walpole tea'd with me again. He still had his wonderful set of Max Beerbohms : the remorse had vanished. He agreed heartily with me that if he had not bought he would have regretted it for ever after. That sensation seems to me the acid test of a collector.

(3) Even though you tell only one trusted dealer (and, being human, you'll tell more), yet the fact that you are collecting something, however modestly, will soon begin to spread. The runners (who take goods round shops) will be asked to keep a look-out. Some fool of a dealer may even advertise. Your main hobby soon becomes expensive. You do not complain, for you are rising in the world as a collector, the value of your stuff increasing. Only, it limits your buying : and the collector is like certain types of women at a bargain counter : *some*thing must be bought. Therefore choose, say, ten more subjects for collection : not with a view to learning all about them, but rather with the idea that you shall know enough to buy well. This, too, will further vary your possessions and save rooms from the nightmare of organised monotony. Antiques are wretched indeed if they do not look at home : in other words, are not allowed to group themselves naturally as they did in their proper period. (By that last dangerous word I do not, please believe, intend the calculated " Period Room " of a paid decorator. Sooner than that, almost, the museum cases !) What I mean by these " side shows " I must explain in a later chapter, for they add much to a collector's happiness. They are the very antithesis of that usual advice to " specialise at all costs," which I have condemned already.

(4) For " fun," and what I persist in calling sport, have three or four secret collections. Take something, *no matter how humble or recent*, that is interesting, decorative or amusing in itself. Let it be something that is, when you start, not—so far as you know—collected : something about which there is no literature existent,

Multiply by three or four. Now buy these things and study their doubtless unimportant history, their special qualities, their hidden virtues. Keep as quiet as you can about them. Let them live in drawer or cupboard. Show them to nobody, not even to collector-friends. Don't ask for them at shops ; buy only those you see. Even so, they will grow scarcer ; the price will inevitably rise. (You are not an idiot : you do not choose something frequent and unbreakable, of which there are a million existent.) Then, by a slow progression, you must become more daring ; little by little you release your absurd-seeming secret. You ask ; you even advertise. In humble papers as a first beginning : then, grown desperate, in those excellent " mediums " for collectors, *The Times* front page and *The Connoisseur*. By now your game is up. The copyists, that most ignoble crowd, are busy, hot upon your trail—but they will never catch you up. And if you are human, as most collectors are, that too you will find great sport.

This last heading seems to me vitally important, if one is fully to enjoy collecting. Therefore—at the risk of losing that millionaire reader thus early in the volume, before I reach my so expensive Rowlandsons !—I mean to give my next chapters to three such " mystery collections " (as the ungrammatical stunt-Press would call them), now for the first time drawn forth from the depths of drawer or cupboard. Even if I fail to communicate the fun that their amassing gave me, perhaps I may amuse you by their own quaintness and the odd, trivial things that I have found out, in eight years, about them.

Those who can raise no interest in trifles may easily omit my next three chapters—and most of the others !

CHAPTER V

PANORAMAS

CENTENARIAN readers possibly may smile in scorn when they see panoramas suggested as a fruitful subject for collection. They will remember the days of their youth and recall the real nature of a panorama. They will recall the vast domes, grander than those of any modern cinema, that sprung, mushroom-like, towards the sun in half the towns of England. Yes, they certainly will smile, but pitifully and in old kindly wisdom, as they see the pride of this generation in its towering cinemas ; its piteous belief that they are an eternal joy, not in turn to be uprooted, mushroom-like, for something thought better by " moderns " still unborn.

No need, dear elders, to smile at me in pity ! I know well about those vast old panoramas, though I never saw them.

I have, in my shamefully salad-like collection, many a toy model of these old panoramas, many an old book about them. Most concern only one spectacle : but there are three that tell me, very fully, what this glory must have been at its highest : in the Colosseum, begun from designs by Decimus Burton in 1824.

The first, modestly bound in brown paper, was published in 1829 at eighteenpence, and is entitled " A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE COLOSSEUM IN THE REGENT'S PARK, LONDON, Printed for the Proprietors and Sold at

the Exhibition and by all Booksellers." Six very large pages are given to description. " The Colosseum as a building and the panoramic picture it contains are works of such novelty, magnitude and singularity, that they seem almost to defy the powers of description, and to baffle all attempts at being represented through the medium of language." So begins the author, but, aided by eight big plates that join to form one long panorama of London as seen from the top of St. Paul's, he does very well. " Mr. Hornor, the projector of this work, finished the sketches in 1824, having constructed scaffolding and a suspended house, or large box, above the highest cross of the Cathedral, at a time when a new ball and cross were required to surmount the summit of the edifice. The undertaking was daring and hazardous. . . . From 1824 to the present time, the building, gardens, and picture have been in progress. It is not requisite to explain, in this place, the reason for opening the exhibition before the last touches have been given. Suffice it to say that enthusiastic minds are not often regulated by the laws of prudence and discretion : and that the zealous projector was more eager to commence new and surprising designs than to finish those in progress." (Is anyone the wiser if I add that Mr. Hornor was a landscape gardener by profession ?)

All, it will be seen, very philosophic and discreet : and the whole scheme seems to have had restraint. We are specially told that the vestibule is " plain " : and when visitors reached the very " centre of the Rotunda " they were in nothing worse than " a spacious circular apartment, called the Saloon, fitted up with festooned and flowing draperies, hung and arranged in imitation

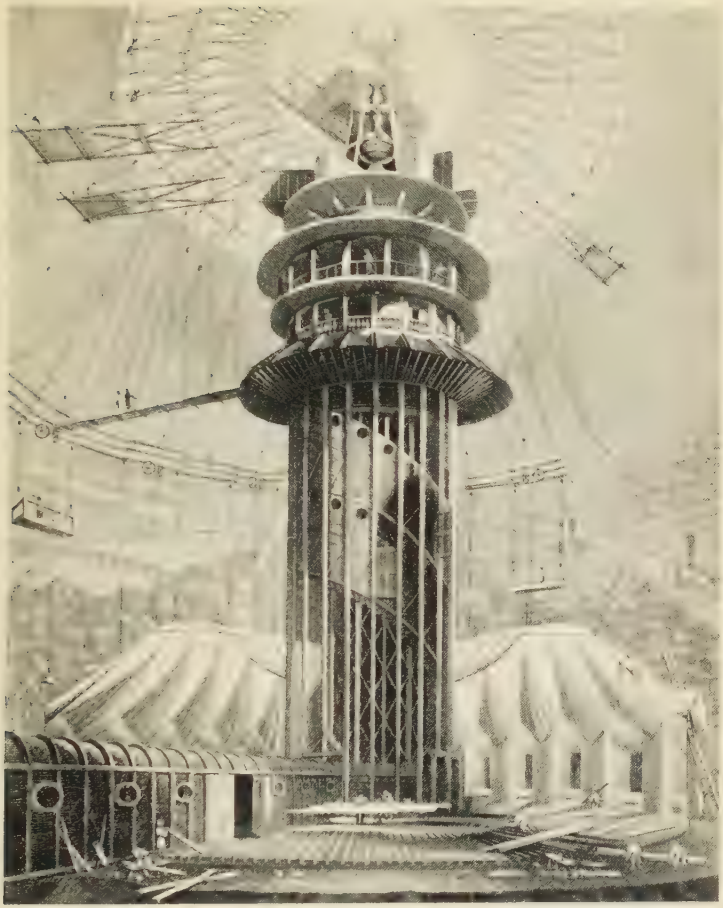
of an immense tent, arched overhead and formed with numerous recesses, around the exterior verge, for settees and tables: whilst a collection of pictures, sculptured and fancy pieces, objects of virtu and curiosity, are dispersed through the scene."

I hope I may not be giving away my taste with both hands when I say that this strikes me as a prudently modulated opulence.

"This apartment," proceeds the author, "is intended as a place of rest, or for promenade. In hot weather it affords a cool temperature, being subterranean: and in cold weather it will be mild and comparatively warm." (Again, that "will" and "comparatively" seem to me discreet.) "The immediate centre of this room is occupied by a circular enclosure of strong and substantial frame-work, containing two spiral stair-cases and a circular chamber, in which is suspended a small coved room, which will contain from ten to twenty persons and may be raised by secret machinery, with its company, to the gallery."

What we have lost in a century of so-called progress! What joy to have lived in an age when lifts were worked by "secret" machinery and everyone was simple!

Up at the top, mysteriously, the spectators stood upon "a balustraded gallery, in exact imitation of the outer dome of St. Paul's Cathedral," and found themselves gazing down upon London, stretching around them in perspective and full colour. "Histories, descriptions, maps and prints, are all imperfect and defective when compared to this immense Panorama—they are scraps and mere touches of the pen and pencil—whilst this imparts at a glance a *cyclopædia of informa-*



THE COLOSSEUM HALF BUILT

from the rare set of "Five Graphic Illustrations of the Colosseum, Regent's Park," by MacKenzie, Gandy, etc. (Ackermann, June, 1829). Note the "festooned" saloon and old ball of St. Paul's

PLATE 10 [*Facing p.* 40

tion—a concentrated history—a focal topography of the largest and most influential city in the world." Even this outburst we must not judge extremely, when we reflect that they had on show " the original ball removed from St. Paul's," and that the picture itself measured " 40,000 square feet or nearly an acre in extent." Besides, after describing the landscape gardener's conservatories and waterfalls, and explaining that Mr. Hornor " fancied that his art had the necromantic or talismanic power of creating mountains, dells, cascades and the most delicious scenes of Paradise, from within a small piece of flat ground," the author adds delightfully, " All these things have been nearly accomplished," and so leaves us his debtor for a classic instance of Truth superseding the Superlative.

All this vanishes, and we feel nearer to the supercinema already as we open the second book, in its cloth binding that bears the Royal Arms. " A DESCRIPTION OF THE COLOSSEUM AS RE-OPENED IN M.DCCC.XLV, Under the Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen and H.R.H. Prince Albert," is its more impressive title. In place, too, of the eight plain plates, there are now, not merely plates in colour, but plates printed by the Kronheim process (in themselves now food for some collectors), and plates strikingly embossed, so that white buildings stand out boldly from a London atmosphere more pink and blue than I should call the usual.

The building is the same, the panorama has not altered : but the new proprietor is much superior, more sniffy. Remembering the exquisite reasons given for a premature opening by the first owner, we cannot but be hurt when we read : " Circumstances, much to be

regretted, prevented its being opened in a perfect state : and when the property changed hands, some alterations were made that did *not* elevate its character as a place of public entertainment." Our first author would never have underlined his " not " in this catty way. Again, what could be more ignoble than this reference to the first proprietor's tasteful Saloon, with its " festooned and flowing draperies," containing " objects of virtu and curiosity " trustfully disposed within its " numerous recesses " ? He refers to this artistic set-out in words such as these (taken from my third book, dated 1848, the year in which the Colosseum was " re-embellished " by him) : " Those who remember the apartment on this site called the ' Saloon of Arts,' cannot fail to be struck with its complete transformation. In lieu of the calico draperies, which had the appearance of a large tent hastily fitted up for some temporary purpose, . . ."

Shades of Decimus Burton ! We will read no more of this, with its substituted cornices and columns, " all in gold " ; its " several thousand feet of richly cut glass " ; its " Glyptotheca, or Museum of Sculpture, Designed by Mr. William Bradwell," the works in which are all, we learn, " for sale." Around the spiral staircase of poor Decimus, and hard by his " Ascending Room " (still raised, let us note, " by secret machinery") we now have " seats covered with Utrecht velvet, raised on a dais and divided by groups of Cupid and Psyche supporting candelabra in the form of palm-trees ; the figures being white, and the draperies, leaves, plumes, etc., gilded, the effect is extremely brilliant." No, I cannot accept Mr. Bradwell's ideas either

of grammar or of decoration. I feel sure that his new panorama of 1848, " Paris by Moonlight," painted by Mr. Danson for his " Re-Embellished " Colosseum, was not so good as the original one of London painted by the admirably modest Mr. Hornor.

This new man is a humbug. In his book of 1845 he describes the panorama of London as " painted by E. T. Parris," with a mere footnote to say : " This extraordinary and, in its peculiar style, *unequalled* effort of human ingenuity and perseverance was projected and commenced by Mr. Horner " (*sic*) " and completed by Mr. E. T. Parris and assistants," though we have seen Mr. Hornor hanging over St. Paul's Cathedral in the cause of art. Listen, once more, to this charlatan second-comer on his alleged improvements. " The first glance of the visitor will show that the outlay has been enormous and that a higher feeling than the mere object of gain must have prompted so lavish an expenditure." To this there is only one retort ; that heart-cry, never managed in my hearing by anyone, but dear to serial writers : " Pshaw ! "

Nobody will be surprised to hear, after this, that there is, besides the Glyptotheca, a " Gothic Aviary " ; also a " Mer de Glace," a " Chalet or Swiss cottage," " Classic Ruins," a model " Glaciarium," and an " Exterior Promenade," or that, as in theatre programmes of to-day, there is added a list of firms responsible for so much artistic and altruistic effort.

" The magnificent cut glass dome in the Museum of Sculpture by Mr. Richard Turner of Dublin.

The Gothic and Elizabethan Stained Glass supplied by Mr. Bailie, London.

" The Renaissance Ornamental Leather supplied by Mr. Leake, 52, Regent Street.

" The whole of the extensive Gas Fittings by Mr. Henry Jones, Covent Garden."

And so on, *diminuendo*, down to the Refreshments, inevitably " on a liberal scale." It is hideous to admit: but the new owner, after so much un-commercial " feeling " and liberality about refreshment, lets his last words to us be a footnote: " These tickets do not entitle the Subscriber to view the Stalactite Caverns " . . .

It is easy to see the vulgarity behind such pretension; but contemptuous moderns must not imagine that there was nothing good in the original conception. This is very far from true. The designs for this immense Colosseum have vision: they are not easy to forget. Burton's stage-work and central tower, reared a century ago, would still be thought daring as a film forecast in some drama of the future. They make *Metropolis* seem tame. Put it another way and call Decimus Burton—a youth of twenty-three when he got this great chance—the first of our Futurists. I remember Gordon Craig, that giant himself among stage designers, praising Decimus Burton as a visionary born out of due season. What reason, then, is there to suppose that the inspired landscape gardener, who found such a man to design his panorama, would be content with any sort of fool to paint it? Probably this view of London and its river, half built and half painted, had a very real artistic value.

The Colosseum was merely the biggest, very far from the first, of the painted panoramas. As early as 1789 Robert Barker (who gains a dozen lines in Bryan's

Dictionary of Painters) commissioned Thomas Girtin (who has a column and deserves more) to paint the first of them. I wonder what became of this interesting work when the public wearied of it? Perhaps Barker used the canvas for one of his own panoramas. Starting with Girtin's, he exhibited a long series of these in Leicester Square, where the shell of his building may still be seen in the picturesque interior of the French Catholic church, Notre Dame de France. Very soon success brought him a Haymarket rival. At his death in 1806 his two sons carried on his work. Henry Aston Barker in particular must have been no less an enthusiast than his father. One may judge of this from the pile of descriptive booklets that he left behind him, each with its engraving of the panorama in outline, with a numbered key, and often with a circular plan also. From these I gather his policy to have been never to give the public time to weary of any given subject. His series of printed "Descriptions" shows that panorama followed panorama rapidly from 1812 to 1844. He was topical, too, so far as his large enterprise allowed. I find him presenting "Spitzbergen" in 1819, "Painted from Drawings taken by Lieutenant Beechey, who accompanied the Polar Expedition in 1818 and liberally presented them to the Proprietor." He presented the Coronation Procession of George the Fourth, also in the year following that event (1822). In 1817 he showed a doubtless excited public the Battle of Waterloo. Perhaps this amazing man would have followed, in this case, even more closely in the footsteps of history; but in the actual year of 1815 he seems to have moved his panoramas from the Strand,

" near Surrey Street " (he had presented " Lisbon " there in 1812), and also he took the subject very seriously. The circular plan in this case is unusually detailed and elaborate. No less than sixty-eight reference-numbers are given, referring very fully to various spots, movements, gallant officers, and so on ; whilst on a separate sheet thirty-one other names are attached to a detail-group of officers, ranging from the Duke of Wellington to a gunner-lieutenant. Indeed military students would find this special booklet full of entertainment—and possibly instruction. It can be picked up in the Charing Cross Road for about two shillings. On the plan appears : " Mr. H. A. Barker respectfully informs the Public that, in order to give a correct Representation of the Battle of Waterloo, he went to Paris, and, from the Officers at Head-quarters, procured every possible Information on the Subject. A set of Eight Etchings from his original Sketches of the Field of Battle is published, executed by Mr. J. Burnet ; and may be had at the Panorama ; price One Guinea." Young Barker took himself and his art seriously, as befitted one who rightly claimed to be a son of " The Inventor of the Panorama," whose productions had won praise from Gainsborough himself.

I doubt if that great painter would have found the same merit in Robert Burford's panoramas. I judge by this only, that he seems to have been a copyist. His booklet " Descriptions," though carried out by a different printer, are so similar to Barker's that one has to look twice before one is certain which is whose. Moreover, he appears tamely to have followed in young Barker's footsteps, for when Barker moved to Leicester

Square we find Burford presenting " Geneva " at the old Strand premises (1827) ; and when Barker either retired or died in (I think) 1844, Burford stepped in turn into the premises at Leicester Square and presented " Athens," assisted by H. C. Selous (1847).

These descriptive booklets of the early panoramas would be in themselves a good subject for those unimaginative idiots who " don't know what to collect " ; and browsing on my handful of them I am getting fast drawn into a treatise. Forward to later, humbler, forms of panorama, that make fodder for collectors !

Regretfully, however, for I hanker, bore-like, to trace my subject through the " Diorama," which had lighting-effects and a switch-over, past all its subtleties, to that " Myriorama," which, as presented by the showman Poole, delighted my young eyes in Dublin—towns that lit up at night, fleets that belched flame, all rolled before me on one long slowly-moving strip that filled the stage with joy and probably (if we believe psychology) set my brain worrying with such a back-street and unproductive subject as old panoramas.

This great Colosseum itself can be seen, close beside Albany Street, a dignified stone building with classic portico, almost in the centre of a long strip-panorama, " Panoramic View Round the Regent's Park, From Drawings taken on the Spot by Richd. Morris, Author of *Essays on Landscape Gardening* " : published by R. Ackermann, 96, Strand, in 1831. On the stiff board cover is a large and fine coloured print of Portland Place, " Drawn by R. Morris : Engraved by S. H. Hughes." Inside this the panorama itself is folded, and when extended gives a view that runs from Harrow

past Hampstead to Hanover Terrace and measures over 18 feet in length by 6 inches in height. It must be realised that the best panoramas of this kind are carried out in choice aquatint ; and this specimen is a delightful piece of work in Ackermann's finest quality, that could not be improved in quality if its size were only a few inches.

Another is yet bigger, lumbering my panorama-drawer and yet defying any frame, for it is eighteen inches high and very near nine feet in length. This is " Sidmouth, Devon," another singularly beautiful aquatint, " Published July 1st, 1815, by John Wallis, Junior : in London by J. D. Wallis and R. Ackermann, the Repository of Arts, Strand. Engraved by Havell, 5, Chandos Street, Covent Garden." It is crammed with pleasant figures and lovely scenery : whilst well in the centre stands a picturesque old house that bears the legend, " Wallis's, the Original Circulating Library and Reading Room." It is easy to see that John Wallis, junior, was human. Indeed, even in the long dedication to a local benefactor, he describes his panorama as " taken from the Beach immediately opposite the Marine Library," adding that it " includes an extent of country from Torbay to Bridport " as what was, one feels sure, a matter secondary in importance to John Wallis, junior.

A third early panorama of this sort deserves mention, because it leads us to the second kind. It is of Brighton (1833), and its cover bears the Royal Arms in colour and gilt, with an inscription : " To Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Adelaide this Panoramic View of Brighton is (by Permission) most humbly Dedicated."

PANORAMIC HAND-SCREEN

French, early 19th century. Described on p. 63

PLATE 11 [*Facing p.* 48

This is roughly uniform in size with that of Regent's Park and no less decorative, with a similar show of varied coaches, soldiers, school-crocodiles, goat-chaises, equestrians—including the royal party—and other lively episodes of a sea-front clearly more picturesque before the Grand and Metropole hotels swept away whole rows of humbler houses. It is drawn by H. Wilde, a local architect, " engraved by A. Edington of London, published by W. H. Mason at the Repository of Arts, 1, Ship Street, in Brighton " and in London by the inevitable Ackermann, who always had a hand in anything artistic at this time. How educational, and how depressing to turn from this Ackermann panorama to those of Queen Victoria's coronation produced by Spooner and others, only a year or two later : how much worse to look at the alleged " comic " strip-panoramas that were soon to pour upon the Victorian market ! Only the death of the Duke of Wellington, so far as I know, was able to inspire a worthy panorama. Certainly it is a successful, if amazing, performance, this well-drawn and admirably coloured view of the whole procession, which must have taken a full hour to pass. Ackermann is still the publisher (March 1, 1853), which may explain much : the artists responsible are H. Alken and—surely rather unexpected ?—George Augustus Sala. It is over sixty-six feet in length and cost two guineas at the time when it was published. No wonder that Ackermann advertised it as " elaborate " !

The more modest " Brighton " of just twenty years before was issued not only in the folded strip between boards, but also rolled tightly in a well-made cylindrical

box of varnished yellow wood, decorated with a handsome Royal Arms and bearing the same dedication as the folded version.

Such is what I have called the second sort of model panorama : and just as the long strip, if stood up in a circle, represents the Colosseum type of circular oil-painting, so does this second type, upon its roller, stand for Poole's later Myriorama so far as method is concerned. The date, however, is still that of the earlier type, and, indeed, at the far left-hand end of this " Brighton," where Hove now stands, may be seen a vast dome described as " the Antheum," which one may feel sure was a local panorama.

Another handsome specimen of this type is " The Champion of England at the Coronation of His Majesty George IV," at any rate so far as concerns the picture—horse, champion, armour, herald—that decorates the wooden case. Inside, there is a falling-off from the high standard set by Ackermann. Perhaps, next to him, the French were happiest in this minor art. I have two very pretty coloured specimens, in boxes more dainty though less gorgeous than the English. One is called " La Promenade Parisienne : à Paris, chez Susse, Passage des Panoramas, 1820," the other " Promenade, No. 2 : Monuments de Paris." They are uniform, and I have seen no other : but here is a rich field for collectors more often than myself in Paris.

Very deceptive to beginners are the little humble-seeming cylindrical cases that bear no inscription on their outside, merely some sporting subject (boxers or a horse-race), for these contain delicate little strips, scarcely two inches tall, and are extremely rare, so

far as my experience proves. One in my collection bears a small paper circle printed with the words, " Going to Epsom Races : A ludicrious " (*sic*) " Amusement Consisting of Modern Costume, Characters, Dandies, Equipages, and Horsemanship : Published by S. and J. Fuller, Temple of Fancy, 34, Rathbone Place, 1819. Price 15*s*. Col^{d}. : 10*s*. 6*d*. plain ; in Cases." I fear that this price would have to be exceeded now, at least for a Col^{d}. specimen.

It is, indeed, surpassed in price only by another very similar, but slightly taller, called " Going to a Fight," described as by " J. R. Cruikshank," and boasting to show " the SPORTING WORLD in all its variety of STYLE and COSTUME along the Road from HYDE PARK CORNER to MOULSEY HURST." Cruikshank, it must be said at once, did not fail anywhere along that route, and even went a little further, for he shows us, when the prize-fight is over, a round or two (if this is right ?) of bull-baiting and even the weary sportsmen settling up at the Subscription Rooms.

These two panoramas may be small, but they are excellently printed, especially the larger one that shows the prize-fight, and throw a very strong light on manners of a bygone day. Early ; brittle ; appealing to collectors of London prints and sporting relics ; no easy prey for fakers :—they have much in their favour : and no collector who sees copies, even if they seem to him expensive, will be wise to resist temptation. Americans go nearly mad at sight of their little yellow cases.

There is not always a wooden case, though this is usual. One, undated except by its costume of the

thirties—a colour-lithographed and eight-foot " Edinburgh "—is in a black japanned cylinder, that looks as if it ought to hold the plume of some old helmet: another, a home-made effort of the sixties—a very lengthy and very lurid " Life of Nelson "—is simply left, endless and uncased, on a brown roll of wood. But anyone who comes, in a shop, upon one of these cylindrical yellow boxes should always open it and see if it contains a panorama.

Should any reader still not feel quite clear as to the exact look of these slip-panoramas (as I have christened them), one may be seen in the London Museum, the gift of Her Majesty the Queen, that indefatigable collector of everything beautiful and old. It is in the glass case that stands near the first-floor landing. As it lies there, coiled in a rough circle, it looks to me as though it has come from a wooden case and so escaped the folding process, but I am not quite sure. The subject is London, the date 1824, the engraver Havell, junior, who has shown us London in its daintiest and gayest shape. This specimen should convert any waverer to the charms of panorama.

And if, in the end, I have made no converts I assure you that I shall not grieve. The drawer that holds these panoramas, and one above it that is crammed with peep-shows, have been my secret for some years now. The wise collector will not tell the world—will not even let too many dealers know—what it is, exactly, that he's after. Privily, and with much circumspection, have I piled up my drawerful. Now I should like to take the credit of confession, of sharing my joys with the reader: but I must be more honest. My game,

alas, is up, even if I have kept silent. The Americans have long ago discovered the charm of panoramas; recently of peep-shows also. No use any longer to try secrecy! Or not (I add darkly) about these two special subjects. . . .

The race is started. May the best man win! But, please believe, I should not mourn if I were still the only English starter.

CHAPTER VI

PEEP-SHOWS

THE peep-show was (if I may speak in stud terms) by Panorama out of Regent's Park. It was an attempt to get the illusion of solidity and distance, that the vast Colosseum and its small models gave, by simpler and more scientific means.

There is, I must admit at once, no reason in the world to think that my own term " peep-show " was ever used at the time when these things were popular. It was an age eaten up with the conceit of its own little knowledge, and dearly it loved mumbo-jumbo. It could call a profile-cutter a " papyrotomist " ; an automatic profilist was known as " Prosopographus " ; Adolphe made his silhouettes in a " Monographic Institution." The peep-show, we shall see, gained many an astounding name.

Taking the privilege of a pioneer (for I do not know that anyone has yet written more than a few lines about either panoramas or this off-shoot from them), I mean to adopt the word, although I know well that it fits also a much more ambitious bit of work.

The peep-show proper, though smaller than a panorama, is yet bigger than the object which (if you will but be patient), I hope somehow to describe. Pleasant French aquatints have made us familiar with the little square boxes, often supported on a stick like some large hurdy-gurdy, into which passers-by looked

A PEEP-SHOW MAN

" Jamie the Showman and his Brother " with Sir Peter Nimmo. Silhouette (13 in. × 10) cut by Edouart, about 1827, with painted background

PLATE 12 [*Facing p.* 54

on payment of a copper ; Rowlandson, with his eye for picturesque detail, naturally has used them in his drawings ; and I have even a large silhouette by Edouart in which " Jamie the Showman " is letting his young brother look into a peep-show, apparently through a short telescope, in the presence—and before the painted residence—of " Sir Peter Nimmo."

If anyone is still not clear as to what I mean, let him go to the National Gallery and see the wonderful peep-show by Samuel Van Hoogstraten (1626–1678) : N.G. 3832, at present in Room XII. This, naturally, is not the peep-show of commerce. It is, indeed, what in the cinema world would doubtless be called a Super Peep-Show or even *de luxe*. Inside a large and beautifully decorated cabinet, one-half of which is filled by glass reflectors, the visitor sees, through two peep-holes, what seems to be a whole Dutch interior. From the front hall, so far as I remember, radiate a restful sitting-room, through the latticed window of which a bold lover looks in at a seated girl, and a bedroom in which a more lazy lady of the house lies sleeping. At the other end all that I recall—although I imagine there must certainly be more—is a delicious tiled room, in the midst of which a dog has been magnificently placed. It is only on examining closely this dog, which seems proudly central on the black-and-white tiling, that one realises fully the artist's cleverness : for it has been painted half on the floor and half on the wall. The peep-show, however, is far more than clever : it combines beauty with illusion. I cannot imagine how Sir Robert Witt forced himself,

even for the pleasure of others, to give so fascinating a treasure to the nation.

The peep-shows that I myself have secretly collected for many years are of a far humbler nature, though their idea remains the same. They are exercises in perspective, but carried out with cardboard in the place of wood; colour-printing in the place of paint. They are not easy to describe. Perhaps the word "concertina" is more graphic than any other, to express the method in which they open out, when taken from their decorated cardboard cases. The concertina part is made of paper and joins six or seven pieces of cardboard cut to look very much like scenery for a toy-theatre. I need hardly add that the piece nearest the peep-hole is more hollow than those behind, so that one peers as through a gradually thickening forest and sees only a small part of the backmost scene. As each of these coloured flats is separated from its neighbour by several inches of paper—the extended concertina! —the illusion of perspective is really amazing. Sometimes this is heightened by putting a bit of talc across the inside of the eye-hole: a device lending the haziness of distance. These little views stand out with a solidity far more satisfying than that provided, later, by the eye-torturing stereoscope.

It can be said with safety, I think, that these came a few years after the slip-panoramas, though both reigned together. At any rate, after hunting many years and buying all I have found at any reasonable price, I do not seem to possess one dated with a year earlier than 1825, ten years later than the big "Sidmouth" panorama and six after "Going to Epsom Races." It is

true that few peep-shows are dated, but there seems a certain significance in the fact that the earliest in my collection should be dated one year after the opening of the Colosseum and should be a view in Regent's Park. This seems at any rate the start of a new series, based on a big popular success. " The Areaorama " is the horrific title given to it : " A View in the Regent's Park " (why have we dropped that delicious " the " ?), and it is, unlike most of its successors, documented as if an engraving : " Pub^{d}. May 1st, 1825, by S. & J. Fuller, 34, Rathbone Place," the publishers of " Going to Epsom Races." It is, one must add, a very good start, and later attempts did not improve upon it greatly.

No doubt, as these objects are more and more collected, my first judgments will be found wanting ; but that is no reason why I should not try to blaze my own modest trail. I should put the same date to two German panoramas of this sort, called " Teleorama " and " Teleorama ii.," for they follow the method exactly though their quality is worse. By 1838 we find these highly flavoured titles giving way to the modest if misleading " Perspective View," applied to an original and very brave attempt to convey, by exaggerated narrowness, the full length of Westminster Abbey as it appeared when crowded with peers, bishops, bandsmen and the rest for Queen Victoria's Coronation in that year. This was published by Charles Tilt, Fleet Street, and is unusual in many ways. On the outer case, for one, is a serious-looking print of the Abbey in plain brown, whilst the peep-hole is (as in the French models) camouflaged as part of the inner cover, so that one

peeps appropriately through a Gothic window which opens as you draw the " concertina " folds apart. This is, indeed, an interesting specimen, of which I have never found a second copy, though it seems certain that many must have been printed to mark so big an occasion. Time and children have probably destroyed them.

Those of 1843 are, at least, self-dated : the opening of the Thames tunnel on March 25th released a very cataract of mimic tunnels on the market. Not counting duplicates, I have no less than twelve different versions printed in England and one in Germany. Some of these show not only the tunnel but also the shipping on the river surface. These, labelled " A Perspective View of the Thames and Thames Tunnel," are very rough, and were sold by Azulay in the tunnel itself, with much explanatory letterpress, at probably a moderate price. Others, that show the tunnel only, are most ingenious. This was, one sees, a subject made for such a purpose, and the results are a wonderful illusion of highly vaulted and receding distance. It must be added that S. F. Gouyn, of 7, Fish Street Hill, published a similar peep-show of the tunnel " as it will appear when completed " no less than fifteen years before, " Feb. 1, 1828," and made a very happy forecast of the ultimate effect.

1851 was another great year, when no dates were needed ; and now it is, more happily, " Telescopic Views," or views " Telescopically Arranged," that we get of the great Exhibition in Hyde Park. These were sold both in the Exhibition itself and at the bookshops for about four shillings and sixpence. That was the

price charged by C. A. Lane, of 46, Stanhope Street, who published both a " Telescopic View of the Ceremony of Her Majesty opening the Great Exhibition of all Nations ; Designed by Rawlins," and another of " The Interior of the Great Industrial Exhibition : Lithographed and Printed at C. Moody's Lithographic Establishment, 257, High Holborn : June 3rd, 1851." Of these, the second gets the best effect of distance, and is, in fact, in this respect one of the best ever produced. It is on ten pieces of cardboard, and the great girders of the Exhibition help immensely to gain the illusion. Spooner produced on August 9th, 1851, a rival view of equal length—still called a " Perspective View "—but more cramped and less lofty. At the back of this there was a printed guide, in which we read : " The most striking objects which present themselves to the spectator along the centre of the nave are :

(1) The Portrait of Her Majesty, painted on Sevres China.
(2) The Koh-I-Noor Diamond in its gilt cage.
(3) The colossal statue of Queen Victoria, cast in Zinc,"

and so on through nine " items," including " The Archangel Michael overthrowing Satan " ; after which even we were meant to reach :

" The United States' Compartment, with the trophy of articles in vulcanized india-rubber erected upon the model of a suspension-truss-bridge. Under the Star-spangled banner and Eagle of America, which float on high, at the extreme end of the building, is placed Gray and Davison's splendid organ."

Unluckily the designer, George F. Bragg, seems to have forgotten that the first central object must inevitably hide all behind it, for anybody looking through

a peep-hole : so that these exhibits are to be seen only by contortion or by unfair peeping over the top of the concertina.

Here again I find that, without counting duplicates, I have collected eight versions of the Exhibition : and there may well be others.

It is a pity that more historical occasions did not tempt the makers and so give us a better chance of fixing the real dates. One of a theatre scene has certainly the look of being as early as 1810, if one may judge by the costumes of a crowded house ; another, delightfully futuristic and experimental, affords a sure clue (it is " THE FIRST ROYAL IRON " between Nuremberg and Furth), if only I knew more about the origin of foreign railways.

These continental peep-shows had one attraction lacking in the English specimens : you could look, not only down the centre, but also, through two smaller holes, down little avenues at either side. This is especially successful in a beautiful " Champs Elysées," where the verdant side-views, crowded with life, make an admirable foil to the open central vista that sweeps up proudly to the Arc de Triomphe.

It must be said that, in this small but pleasant art, now dead, the French came first, the English a good second, and the Germans nowhere. Not only were the French *optiques* (as they called them, brilliantly) far better printed than our own, and as a rule more artistic in design, but by a pleasant convention the excellent coloured engraving on the inside top-cover concealed the three peep-holes in its surface. " Champs Elysées " is long ; but one of " Le Parc de Versailles " combines

A PEEP-SHOW, EXTENDED

A sporting attempt to photograph "Her Majesty opening the Great Exhibition" as seen through its peep-hole

PLATE 13 [*Facing p.* 60

brevity with beauty in an amazing way. I have only three (the third being " Promenade de Longchamp," a view almost Rowlandsonian in human interest), and these are numbered Optique numero 4, 8 and 10 respectively ; so that, though I have myself failed in Paris, there must be more there to reward any collector who, unlike my fickle self, will specialise upon these fascinating playthings.

I am surprised, when showing mine, to find how very few people seem ever to have seen one. I had imagined that they must be in, at least, the London Museum ; yet a recent visit there ended not only in my own disappointment, but in my feeling that I must save others from the same. I therefore presented to the Museum a copy of the " Opening of the Great Exhibition of all Nations." I hope that, as readers peer through at Queen Victoria, slender in white amid all the glory, they will find themselves able to share my enthusiasm.

Certainly people were keen enough at the time. No subject was thought too big or too pretentious. " Napoleon and the Battle at Eylau, fought the 9th February, 1807 " ; " Victory of the British Arms in the East Indies " (a very lurid business this) ; " Constantinople " ;—admirable for the huge Colosseum, they were squeezed into a cardboard box with a result (it is only fair to add) surprising in the amount of its success. Napoleon's battle, in particular, which has a fine allegoric cover, conveys the bleakness of snow excellently, is well grouped, and in only seven sheets of cardboard gives an amazing sense of distance. If this peepshow could be proved contemporary with the Battle of

Eylau, it would be the earliest that I have so far found : but though it has more dignity than many dated later, and though one fails to see why this special battle should be chosen except as topical, I would not like to quote 1808 or 1809 for it with any certainty at all, though I believe that to be about the birth-time of these peep-shows.

Gradually, as with most popular amusements, every possible refinement (and I use this bad word in its worst sense) was added to the original invention. " Areaorama " and " Teleorama " were left far behind by a generation that had its " Polyorama Panoptique " (a squat box-like contraption that gave a change of lighting—from dawn to gas-light—and of subject even) ; its medical-sounding " Panoramacopia," and its " Doeidorama " (which rather ingeniously showed a peep-show of Rome or of Naples, both complete with side-avenues, according as the owner looked in at one end or the other). Amateurs, too, began to do their best or worst, and one finds many a hand-painted, home-made effort, in which, oddly, the general failure comes from putting the cardboard strips far too close together. I have, however, an admirable " Tintern Abbey " and a beautifully drawn but ludicrously cramped Country Fair Scene. As to this last, it is interesting to note that the niggardly supply of paper that joins the cardboard (contemporary, because painted to represent the ground, which shows) is water-marked 1814. This points to the model peep-show being, as I have hinted, earlier than specimens actually dated prove.

Meanwhile, still flourishing alongside, that older favourite the panorama did not escape refinement. I

have three chaste handscreens of about 1820 whereon, framed in an idyllic rural scene of shepherds and recumbent ladies, a view unrolls itself (when and as the ivory handles decide), changing from one royal palace to another through a strip of pleasant country ; the whole transparent, so that my lady—French in this case—could see the picture as she shaded her face from a blazing fire. I think I will end on this delightful trifle rather than on late horrors of Victorian *plages*, cased in crudely flower-decked alabaster, or the Niagara Falls Hotel that turns into the Falls themselves and then to a lavish display of real shells.

How proud they must have been of their own cleverness, caught as they were in the progressive tide of inventions, eccentricities, improvements ! How up-to-date, how " modern," how permanent, must this amusement then have seemed to them !

That taste passed after a full fifty years ; there came the automata, chess-playing, even speaking ; the monster globes ; the waxwork shows ; the temples of mystery ; the Pepper's ghosts ; the skating rinks ; the palaces of danse. And now we have the cinema, flickering before us to the strains of jazz.

How long, O Lord, how long ?

CHAPTER VII

PENNY DREADFULS

I HOPE that I am now a fairly good citizen of at least average respectability. I shall hold to it, at any rate, that my sister is a woman who manages to combine goodness with worldly charm and is the mother of delightful children. Yet, not so many years ago, when we were inseparable and in our early teens, we would dash down Leeming Street in Dublin every week to get at once the next instalment of *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.* Just as our more sentimental and prim parents could scarcely wait, when young, to learn whether Dickens, in spite of postal protests, would really have the cruelty to let little Somebodyorother die in the next coach-borne instalment, so were our two young souls tortured by the feeling that Sweeney had begun to fail, was slitting fewer weasands (I think this was the phrase ?) and dropping fewer shave-clients to the cellar through his revolving shop-floor. Almost with our tongues hanging out would we rush back to Rutland Square and turn the roughly printed pages, to see what had really happened. The end, unluckily, we never reached. Sweeney was so long about it, spare pennies were so very scarce. Again and again the demon Barber would send out his unhappy boy " to buy a pie " (sardonic demon, since he knew that they were made, down in his cellars, from slit victims !) so that he might shave

some sailor with a rope of pearls or other tempting customer : but page followed page too often, and in the end we left him just as a too persistent dog, the property of a late owner, and a queer smell proceeding from the pie-shop underground (where a poor wretch was fed only on his own productions) seemed sure to bring the police—or was it still the Bow Street runners ?—close upon his heels. The penny for that week was wanting. Possibly we spent it on some fierce wax-works that opened, about then, at the nearer end of the same Leeming Street ? Or maybe, remembering the first number with its thirty-two pages and a blood-ful coloured plate, we felt the later mean ration to be less worth its money than a foot-long liquorice ladder ?

But I did not forget. In my last year at Oxford, already editing one paper and busy writing a local burlesque, I joined with six other Undergrads to start a high-brow magazine, *The Oxford Point of View*. (Compton Mackenzie, one of my six accomplices, has utilised this episode fully and amusingly in *Sinister Street*, Volume 2.) My task was to write—in the aloof tones of an extremely aged don—an Editorial causerie entitled, " From an Oxford Window," in which I varied classical quotation with allusive badinage, as stuffily as might be. Yet, thus given a free hand, I seem to have found my pen drifting towards defence of this neglected classic, *Sweeney Todd*, and—always in a discreet don-like detachment—suggesting who the unknown author might possibly have been. My bound volumes of this magazine are burnt : but I can almost swear that I thus libelled R. L. Stevenson. . . . Later I was to learn almost for certain that the book,

honoured in this very year by appearing as a drama at the " Elephant," was really written by some fairly obscure journalist, whose name I have already forgotten, probably in the course of his routine work.

This was not always so, however. Many of these " penny bloods " were written by men already known in other lines, who turned them out with tongue at least half way to their cheek. I have a very interesting bound copy of that other classic, *Ned Kelly, The Ironclad Australian Bushranger*. The above words, as printed by the publisher, appear on top of an inserted title page, and below them is neatly written, half in capitals, by hand :

A
FLATULENT FARRAGO
OF
FATUOUS FICTION.

CONCEIVED BY . G. D. Boucicault.
COMMENCED BY Borlase.
CONTINUED BY Percy B. St. John.
COMPLETED BY M. Vizetelly.
CUT UP GENERALLY (under pretext of sub-editing and otherwise improving)
BY G. D. Boucicault.

This lifts the veil from at least one of these old shockers, and proves in what cynical spirit some of them were " conceived " by their authors. The hand-writing on this title page, (which, I hope I need not add, was never published) is that of Boucicault, who has, throughout the 450 pages, added a marginal " G.D.B." opposite any passage of which he was, in any assorted manner, at all proud. Sometimes it is a

smack in passing at something he dislikes: "The Government regard the proceedings in another light: but thanks to the influence of Exeter Hall, they have peculiar views . . ." (etc.),—passages that pleased him and were no doubt skipped by his disgusted readers:—at another time it is a "good" bit, appealing to his dramatic mind; or yet again, frequently, the true artist's moan "A great deal cut out here." At one time, with a just sense of grievance, he adds to this complaint: "As written, Kelly here brains Avery with the ingot." At another and at more than one, he replaces a joke that has been corrected by a too clever compositor. In "Here's a pretty kittle of fish, as the chap said when he boiled the jelly fish," he crosses out sadly the first "fish" and puts in its place his original "soup." There is scarcely one page without initial or inscription. Even though Boucicault could write that depreciatory title page, he must have been part-serious about his book for boys.

Indeed, it is by no means rubbish. It is lurid in its colour, but the story of the Kelly gang and its round-up is true; the moral excellent. It is wrong to think, as our parents did, that these books were just harmful trash. They may have dealt with bloody deeds; they may have lacked the oily Good Boy, who sickened youth of virtue in the school prize-books of that era; but they were, far more than modern novels or plays, inevitably on the side of Right. All bullies were cowards; all villains gnawed by remorse; all heroes certain of final happiness, all their foes sure of a sticky ending.

This *Ned Kelly*, complete in thirty-eight parts, each

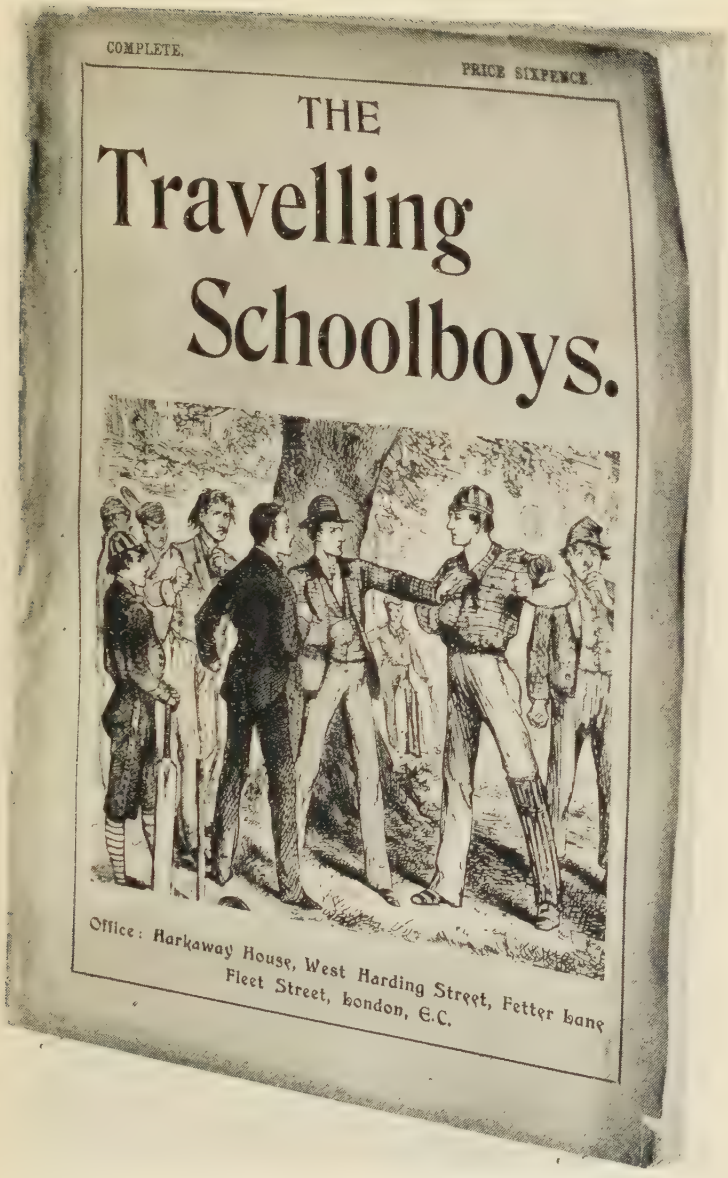
with its lurid illustration, cost three shillings and two pence as published in 1881. Two years ago, when C. Howes, an obviously enterprising bookseller of St. Leonards, caused some sensation in the Press by cataloguing no less than ninety " Penny Dreadfuls," he priced *Ned Kelly* (an ordinary copy, without the manuscript additions) at twenty-five shillings, whilst he valued *Charley Wagg*, *The New Jack Sheppard*, at three guineas. This may make collectors think.

The Times, commenting on this long " run " of penny dreadfuls in one catalogue, gave nearly a full column to the subject, and made a statement that may surprise those collectors who—so far from being " made to think " — are merely feeling rather scornful.

Not only is the " Penny Dreadful " still affectionately remembered by thousands of Englishmen in all parts of the Empire, but, like all other classes of literature in England, it is keenly collected by several great public libraries in the United States. The British Museum is seriously deficient in this sort of printed matter, for it never exercised its copyright prerogative, and now it has to buy what it could have had for the asking.

If it be true that the British Museum, its once haughty spirit tamed, is humbly buying the rejected shockers, who are you, my dear reader, to be quite so sniffy ? Please read on.

There are, it may be added, not only American but English collectors : and soon, doubtless, a literature, solemn and learned, will grow up around these roughly printed weekly leaflets. Already, I think, the points for collectors are quite clear. They must make for the original issues, of the sixties and seventies, not the reprints of the late nineties ; they must, however



A PENNY DREADFUL

in its second state, bound complete. Note the cricket kit worn by that bully, Lord Mouslin de Lain, and the others

PLATE 14 [*Facing p.* 68

hardly, get copies that do not lack the " handsome plate in full colours " generally given as a bribe with the first number; they must buy clean, untorn copies; they must see—less easily than they imagine—that they have all the volumes of a given set. Some of these heroes of Youth became legends and lived through dozens of serial adventures. Jack Harkaway was one such. I, to my shame, have only *Jack Harkaway in America*, and later *With His Son in China :* but well enough I know that Jack fought his way through schooldays at home and through even more perilous days *On The Prairie*, *Out West*, and in possibly a hundred places. I am, I hasten to add, better on *Ned Nimble*, for I not only have him, " beautifully illustrated " as one of *The Pupils of Pickleton Priory*, but also *Amongst the Chinese*, solving *The Secrets of the Purple Pagoda* and *Amongst the Pirates*, where—on the coloured cover—he is seen, with a comrade no less dauntless, standing unterrified upon the pirates' deck, with one of their ropes round his neck at one end and vanishing aloft at the other in a nastily suggestive way, whilst a brave maiden, clad in flowing red, covers the arch-pirate with his biggest gun, over the top of which she holds a flaming torch and no doubt bargains for the heroes' lives.

Probably, however, I have no claim to be a collector. This is one of my scandalous side-shows, to the full enormity of which I yet have to make confession. I doubt if I have fifty volumes. I have never paid three guineas, nor yet twenty-five shillings. (I should add, in justice, that Mr. Howes catalogued many at five or six shillings.) I have bought what I found cheaply.

I have not even got, though I should like, my first love, *Sweeney Todd.*

The Blue Dwarf is one that I value greatly, because it was not niggardly about its illustrations. No first-number meanness here ! In every other issue of this story of Dick Turpin, right up to the fortieth, there was a huge folding-plate of savage nature and fierce colour, as well as the customary illustrations. " I give you three years, then hang ! said the Hounslow Witch," is opposite page 264 ; and not only do you get a real witch in a Welsh top-hat and a red coat, (the women in these plates had, naturally, always to have the blood-colour for their clothes) and the highwayman galloping past on Black Bess, but there are two corpses hanging in chains—hanging correctly, too, not in mere chains, but in great specially-made metal cases, as they do in one of my Rowlandson drawings—and round them the expected carrion crows and, as extra, a bat poised between a duly gnarled tree and the wintry moon. Here, if you like, is value for your penny !

But why choose page 264 and plates ? Any page of print is worth as much. Take number 12, at random :

" Why should I surrender ? " asked Robert.

" Because we are six to one," was the answer : " act like a sensible man and give up your sword. To resist would be worse than madness. We must have the papers you have about you."

" What papers ? "

" The papers you took from the coffin in the vault."

" How know you that ? " cried Robert with a start of surprise, wondering in what way he of the black mask had become possessed of this knowledge.

" Your blood be on your own head," cried the captain. " I will count three and then, if you do not give up the papers, we shall fire. We must have the papers at any price."

" One."

"Two."

Robert waited to hear no more, for the muzzles of six pistols were pointed at him. It looked like certain death.

Quick as thought he drew his pistol from his holsters and fired among them as their leader counted the fatal three.

A shrill shriek rent the air and one of the six men fell to the ground mortally wounded.

"Fire!"

Before this order could be executed, Robert put Brimstone to the leap, uttering as he did so a loud cry of defiance.

Why proceed? Robert is safe enough on page 12 . . . The papers, the six pistols, the resourceful hero, the slow highwaymen—can anyone of average reason doubt that this, and not successful crooks, is the proper medicine for Youth? Serialists and Cinemas, please copy!

I could easily give pages to describing plots, plates, covers, heroes,—the gallant *Sheet Anchor Jack*, already half-way up the pirate's plank before you open his biography; another, *Jack and His Seven Foes*, who all meet just the doom that decent men expect for them; or George Emmett's classic *Charity Joe: From Street Boy to Lord Mayor;* but I ought, rather, to be saying which I consider, rightly or wrongly, to be rare ones, since this is a collector's book. Let me bravely hazard, then, that if a collector of these books had on his shelves, (though I prefer a cupboard,) a complete series of *Ching Ching*, *Jack Harkaway*, *Ned Kelly*, *Gentleman Jack*, *Captain Tom Drake*, *Rupert Dreadnought*, *Tom Wildrake's Schooldays* and the *Boyhood Days of Jack Straw*, he would have made a very good collection and need not worry if he had not the three-guinea *Charley Wagg*, which I have never seen.

Follow My Leader I put in a place apart, not for the

reason that this was another of the books to which I serially subscribed when young, but because it has plates by Phiz, (Hablot Knight Browne) the illustrator of some of Dickens' most famous stories. Very vital and consciously amusing—*o, si sic omnes !*—is he here, too, as he paints Mr. Styngy, Mr. Grubbe, Professor Tomkini, M. de Bewty, Sam Scarecrow, the hero Lionel Wilful, the bully Frederick Flashaway and all the others, more preposterous even than the wildest golliwogs of Dickens at his absolute extreme. Dickensians who shudder at such words must remember that these serialists owed much to their great master, nor worried to conceal it : also that Dickens himself was not above using the descriptive names that had come down from Restoration comedy. If we find the Headmaster of Canem Academy to be Doctor Birch, can we hold Dickens, with his Mr. Wackford Squeers of Dotheboys Hall, absolutely guiltless ? Thackeray, too, had his Dr. Birch. We must remember, always, that those were rather simpler, anyhow less supercilious, times, and men took laughter not as a giggle, but for the broad thing that it ought to be.

Mention of *Follow My Leader* and *The Boys of Canem Academy* brings me to a second sort of Penny Dreadful : the " Thrilling Story of School Life " in which Brett of Harkaway House made something of a corner.

Myself, if I were a collector helplessly wondering where I could find a new field, and not one constantly wishing he could withdraw from a few of those already entered, I should much like to get together all the *serious* stories and studies of School Life that just

preceded or soon followed *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Here, it seems to me, there is room for useful research. Is it better known to others than it was to me, before I bought a copy, that as early as 1809 M. Pelham, " Author of *The Village School*, etc., " wrote a school story of which the hero was " Tom Brown " ? *First Going to School, or the Story of TOM BROWN and His Sisters* is the title : with " Tom Brown " thus, in largest capitals of all. I wonder if Hughes had this as a child, and used it subconsciously when seeking a name for his hero of 1857 ? Another interesting anticipation is found in the title, *How It was Done at Stow School* (1862) : and though the final " e " is lacking, the anonymous authors seem already to have thought this name so probable that they added a gummed slip, to face the title page :

" The authors of the following pages wish it to be distinctly understood that ' Stow ' is a *nom de guerre :* and that there is no reference whatever, in the present volume, to any school which may bear that name, should there be any such."

As early as page 6, we learn why so much caution should be necessary, for this is an attack on certain sorts of public school : " there is the tyranny of unwise and unyielding laws ; there is the tyranny of absurd and revolting customs ; of a cruel and repelling indifference . . . of the strong boys over the weak." Why quote fully ? You may still read it, every year, in some book on our public schools, for every generation believes itself to have discovered its own grievances. " For teachers," we even read on page 3, " we do not so much want scholars as men " . . . Alas, for our vaunted modernity of outlook !

Perhaps, on the whole, these first serious books on school life were too serious? I may be wrong. They might be a depressing subject for collection. If not denunciatory, they were pietistic. The boys, doubtless worn down by the stream of talk proceeding from the elders, were a gloomy lot ; progenitors of Eric rather than of Stalky. William Henry I like best and find most cheery, the hero of an early American school story, *William Henry's School Days*. He at least is human. Hear him on his master : " He has got something very long to flog us with, that bends easy and hurts. Dorry says he keeps a paint-pot in his room and has his whiskers painted black every morning, to make himself look scareful." Besides, he draws the most delirious boy-like illustrations. But those others soon give one the blues. The earlier Tom Brown, falling down on the first page, cries out : " O dear, I believe I am quite killed " and then talks to an old fool who answers logically, " No, my little dear, do not be afraid of that " so long that he never starts for school until page 50 of a meagre 108. As to *In School and Out of School* (1827), I heartily commend the little cricket scene by R. Seymour that is its frontispiece, but I much prefer its bad boy, Henry the bully, even when he spills the ink and " dirtily " laps it up with his tongue, to the dreary heroes William and John who, after tamely absorbing endless pijaws, helping everybody and quoting long passages of Addison, both rival the record performance of Lord Raingo in lengthy decease by dying over fifty pages.

Yes, on the whole, I think I was wrong. It would be healthier to collect the later school yarns, where Virtue

was rewarded by something other than an invariable early death. Probably, too, these will be always rarer, for they were badly bound in thin paper and read by destructive boys, whilst those earlier efforts were surely read out *at* them only, on Sunday afternoon, by aunts. Certainly they will be more amusing, meanwhile, as possessions.

I specially enjoy *The Schooldays of Jack at Eton*, but possibly that may be only because it *is* Eton. It might be less funny if the boys pea-shooting a discomfited villain on the cover were mere Birchamians. I daresay I should chuckle less at that disgraceful behaviour of the " evil-looking Timor " in the first illustration if he were not an Etonian and " Floreat Etona " didn't blaze above him on a big College crest. In honesty I must add that the anonymous " Popular Author " hastens, on page 1, to explain this seeming difficulty about his through-going villain. " He had not the look of an Englishman, but seemed to spring from a different race." That idiomatic " but " makes clear a good deal that is unexpected in these *Adventures of two College Chums*, (I quote the sub-title,) at our famous school. Timor is not quite a typical Etonian. So much is clear even by page 9.

" Having made this announcement, the Russian went away, satisfied that he had caused the two boys as much discomfort as was possible in the space of about three minutes.

" ' My eyes ! ' said Bill Bragg, ' won't you have a lively time of it ? I fagged last half for Timor, and he's a beauty. On the fifth of November he put a torpedo on a chair, made me sit on it, lighted it and sent me flying up to the ceiling. . . .' "

Nervous parents, about to approach Dr. Alington for reassurance, must remember that these were the

good old days ; that this boy's name was Bragg ; and that the dastardly Timor had not the look, quite, of an Englishman. I think, in fact, that we will leave the sadistic Timor, for this is a book, not a West End theatrical production. It will be a relief to reach, after him, even the English bully, Funnybird. Despite his attractive name Funnybird Major was not quite a nice boy, as we find on page 37, where Jack, (they were nearly all Jacks, these heroes) when about to " look up Curtius " for a master is given the black news : " Funnybird is drowning your white mice." What Etonian would sit down under this ? Certainly not Jack Dashley, for a single moment. Least of all when the culprit turned out to be Funnybird's small brother, Minor, walking in the College bully's footsteps.

" He hurried to his room and found Funnybird Minor in the act of putting the last living white mouse in the basin, where the others were floating on their backs."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MEAN REVENGE.

The empty cage was on the table, and the last mouse was struggling in the water. Funnybird was grinning at his wickedness, and pushing the dying mouse under with his fingers. Not hesitating a moment, Jack hit him in the eye and knocked him down.

" Hullo ! What's that ? " asked Funnybird.

" Get up and I'll give you another," replied Jack.

Funnybird Minor was too much of a coward to stand up and fight, so he laid still on the floor and whimpered.

" It's a beastly shame to hit a fellow like that unawares," he continued. " You might have told me you were going to do it."

After such a white-livered exhibition, no one need feel surprise to find the foiled Funnybirds and vile Timor in alliance ; to learn how thrill followed thrill

ETON, BY H. M. BATEMAN

Filial lordliness and parental servility suggested by a clever use of line

PLATE 15 [*Facing p.* 76

in Eton's cloistered life ; to arrive, finally, at nihilism and even the very " Czar " himself ; but always with Timor and Jack, schoolfellows but never chums or comrades, as chief actors in the wild adventures. Timor, by page 201 has developed from what he was on page 1 and Paddington platform, where he rather tamely kicked the hero's " canary bird in a gilded cage." He is now made of sterner stuff.

" Oh, Timor, have mercy," sobbed Effie, as the dreadful fact that she was really to be tortured burst upon her.
" Your fate is in your own hands," he replied. " Will you marry me ? "
" I cannot, for I love Jack of Eton."
Timor gnashed his teeth with rage.
" Always that accursed name," he muttered.
" Spare me as you are a man."
" No, no."

I think it will be admitted that the " Popular Author " has done well. It is magnificent—but is it Eton ? The man not educated there cannot help feeling doubt. Despite the comforting top-hat in every illustration, it is all so different from the picture presented between the chaste cloth covers of Bracebridge Hemyng's *Butler Burke at Eton*.

" CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

Burke was fond of the water, but he was not destined to achieve distinction on its silvery surface. After being three years in the boats, he drifted like most fat fellows into the ten oar."

This is poor stuff indeed after young Jack Dashley. Who wants to read of fat fellows who drift into the ten oar ? This man Hemyng was some sort of Realist or something morbid. Psychology and all that, no

good healthy story . . . . Plot-lovers will not easily forgive that " fat," even if in the four remaining pages Burke does save the match for Eton against Harrow. " When the Harrow boys went in, the time-honoured enquiries were made about ' that duck-pond ' and ' bo-bo-bo-bowl ' resounded on all sides in return." Eton were " at a hundred and twenty, with six wickets to the bad," when Montrose the captain patted Butler Burke upon his back and said :

" Do your best, Burke, or I'll never speak to you again."

Thus threatened, Burke played well. " He took his stand at the wicket," indeed, " like a Colossus," although " Lord H—— bowled for Harrow, and a capital one to handle the leather he was." Burke scored fifty-nine and was then caught at point. " He would have been hoisted on the spot, had not good taste forbidden so enthusiastic a proceeding."

Enough ! This clearly will not do at all. We want our heroes hoisted—even if they're " fat." To hell with " good taste " ! Imagine this same scene as painted by the " Popular Author ! "

It is indeed interesting to reflect that *Butler Burke*, a far better book than the above cricket match might make one think, and *Jack at Eton* were probably separated, in date of publication, by only a few years. The realistic story was published in 1865 : the penny dreadfuls were in full blast by 1870. Even judging by my own modest shelf-full, I find *Who Shall be Leader ? : The Story of Two Boys' Lives*, (reprinted from the now rare *Boys of England*) to be dated 1870 : and *The Boys of Canem Academy* only three years later.

This last is probably the rarest school shocker in my collection. Mr. Barry Ono, one of the keenest collectors, wrote to me five years ago : " You have a very scarce item in *The Boys of Canem Academy*. In all my correspondence with collectors all over the world, I have never heard of another. I have an abridged version of it in the scarce *Boys of Britain*, a George Emmett publication." Already it is true to type. The Headmaster's misfortunes are a strong fount of humour, if of humour more Rabelaisian than in the later efforts ; eight pages and a rough plate are given for a penny ; any new boy who let the bully, however " hulking," defeat him, would, so soon, be decadent indeed : but the names of the characters are normal, " Frederick Davenport " and so on, except for the masters'. It was Edwin J. Brett of Harkaway House and the rival establishment, Hogarth House, (begging readers to get " the original Editions, as other INCOMPLETE works are in the market ") that brought this form of literature to its highest (or, if you prefer, lowest) development. Both these firms claimed to publish the " original " Harkaway Series, and I must leave this matter, I fear, to experts wiser than myself, after expressing a strong preference for the claim of Brett.

Collectors will find here all the subtleties of " state " that make the peculiar joys of book-men. I have, for instance, two copies of that delicious work, *The Oxford and Cambridge Eights*, both published by Edwin Brett. One, clearly the earlier, has a sub-title lacking in the other, *or The Young Coxswain's Career*, together with some floral decorations on the cover, which in both cases shows the Young Coxswain being thrown into the

river by a ruffian ; its publisher is given as " Edwin J. Brett, Boys of England Office, 173, Fleet Street " ; it is better printed on stronger paper ; and it has, after its 120 pages, the first 32 pages of *Ned Nimble Amongst the Mormons or The Cruise of the Rattler*, bound in with it, as well as a full Brett 8-page catalogue on pale blue paper. These last are missing from the later issue, still published at a shilling, which comes from " Edwin J. Brett, Ltd., Harkaway House, 6, West Harding Street, Fetter Lane," and has a plainer but worse-printed cover. On this someone has pencilled " Pubd. 1878 " ; a date I should believe more readily of the first issue. Similarly, " 1875 " has been pencilled on the singularly fierce Dotheboys-like cover of *Boyhood's Battles or Ups and Downs of a Runaway :* (small wonder that he ran from Mr. Hackchild !) and " 1879 " on *Young Jack at School in America.* But who shall say if these are right ? One has grown to mistrust inscriptions. . . .

These few details are, in fact, only given so that amateurs, not too proud for a humble subject, may see that this one leaves room pleasantly for much tabulation and research. To this I would add once more my old inducement : that these books are not only brittle and thus likely to get rarer, but intensely amusing in times of depression. Shall I be, indeed, forgiven if, not content with quoting from the tale of Eton, I give a few excerpts from a Young Coxswain's life at Oxford ?

The Oxford and Cambridge Eights takes us, very properly, on page 1 straight to the known crux of our annual Boat Race. " A gentlemanly youth, Cecil Barrington " it is, this time, who has picked up " and

involuntarily read " the usual disgraceful letter, that always incriminates our punters.

Its contents were as follows :—

" Private and very confidential. Drug the C's : I have a heavy bet on the O's. If you fail, I can hedge at the last moment."

No initials gave a clue to the writer.

Nor was there any superscription.

So the writer and receiver were unknown.

Still, one thing must be clear, I feel, to every reader who knows the dark by-ways of Sport. That year it was Cambridge's turn to be doped.

Luckily, Cecil is the young Oxford coxswain, and a hero. The ruffian on the cover may stun him, even cast him in the Thames : but he cannot " succeed " in getting that incriminating note from his " clenched " though unconscious hand. On page 2 Cecil, like a sportsman, sets out to warn the Cambridge crew about their lethal dose, although he feels there is some risk that, if it should be already inside them, he may be suspected when the symptoms show.

Suspicion, however, comes from the home side. On the morning of the race Cecil gets a grateful letter from the Captain of the Cambridge eight, " the Marquis of Sutton."

" His companions noted the motto and crest " and duly wondered. Cecil, guessing this, handed the note round.

" This is news," said the Earl of Wycombe, captain of the Oxford eight, " but how the deuce did you come to be mixed up with it, eh, Barrington ? "

" Quite accidentally, my lord."

Alas for the respectful and veracious coxswain ! Already Harold Mainwaring, no tramp-like ruffian now,

but with glasses and a flowing beard, is at the very door.

His errand was to drug the Oxford crew.

And this in revenge for Cecil's baulking him !

" He'll pay for his quixotic interference," Mainwaring muttered : " curse him, he belongs to a family I hate. His mother jilted me : in desperation I took to horse racing, gambling—worse. I'll be even with her yet, through him."

Watching his opportunity, he got the cook out of the kitchen and managed to drug both drink and food. . . .

An hour subsequently all was consternation.

One after the other of the Oxford crew was taken seriously ill.

Alas, again ! The old, old story. The yearly drawback to this annual fixture ! Cecil had just strength to send the Marquis of Sutton a hasty scrawl, " We've been drugged instead of you : C. B." What an upset to everybody's plans ! But let the author tell us.

Betting men were furious, especially those who had backed Oxford heavily.

Harold Mainwaring was delighted.

At this instant a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

" It won't do, Shuffling Jemmy," said a voice sternly, " you'd better be off."

It was Detective Mitchell. " You'd better go : I know where to find you when you're wanted."

Yet the race took place. How true is it that Britons can always be British.

A clever physician had attended the Oxonians and administered an antidote, which went far towards completely restoring them.

When the crowd became aware of the fact the commotion was great. Some said it was all a sham on the part of the Oxonians, got up to aid their friends among the betting fraternity.

Others declared that they were fools for attempting to race after such an illness.

Prudent persons hedged their bets.

The Cantabs were very sorry that their adversaries would not postpone the race.

Like honourable fellows, as they were, they disliked taking anything like an unfair advantage of their opponents.

"We must win," said the Marquis of Sutton. "It will not redound much to our credit if we do, though."

A general assent was given to this.

Is there, I wonder, a boy simple enough, in these days, to believe that Cambridge possibly could win, or to swallow the manner in which Oxford gained the victory? "The Oxonians looked seedy," our very Author admits, after their poisoning: but they rowed remarkably, till one of them collapsed.

"Phipps was seen to dash the water about wildly with his oar blade for a few minutes" (where, one wonders, were the Cantabs meanwhile) "and then to succumb utterly.

"Can you steer for us, old fellow?" Cecil asked hurriedly.

"Yes, I fancy I can manage that."

"Then I'll take your oar," said Cecil.

The Earl of Wycombe gave the young hero an approving nod and encouraging smile as he settled steadily to his work."

No doubt these last two paragraphs will help expert rowing-men to solve the question—not answered by our Author—as to where Phipps rowed. In any case the transfer of places was made successfully, although at one moment the Earl had cause to cry: "Pull, lads, steadily and like giants: the Cambridge are close upon us!" Cecil "rowed well, and no mistake about it. A good course of training" (as coxswain) "had hardened his constitution and developed his muscular powers to a precocious extent for his age." No wonder the ladies are said to have kept their gaze fixed upon him; no wonder the Oxford boat "literally flew to victory!"

But are we to believe that all was therefore well? By no means. This was the signal for a general row.

The Cambridge men were leaving their boat at this juncture.

"What's the row?" remarked the Marquis of Sutton.

"Mobbing the Oxonians," said a bystander, respectfully touching his hat.

The Marquis, naturally, was not going to allow that. "A judicious use of oars" he said, "will operate favourably on behalf of our victors." Was there ever a more sporting sportsman?

Not so, however, that dastard Mainwaring.

But Mainwaring was not to be baulked in his purpose thus. Snatching a formidable knife from the belt of a butcher, who had come out stealthily to witness the race, he rushed at Cecil.

When I add that we are still on page 11, I think that I have said all I need say in favour of collecting Penny Dreadfuls.

BOXWOOD CARVING

of Adam and Eve, 6 in. high. Flemish, 16th century. The background adapted from Dürer

PLATE 16 [*Facing p.* 84

CHAPTER VIII

THE SO-CALLED " FIND "

THERE are many delusions about the collector, but probably none more frequent than the belief that he spends life in a hectic dash around back-streets, searching the while for something known technically as a " find."

This " find " I take to be a sort of sublimated swindle. To buy something at a low price scarcely fills the verbal bill. That is a mere bargain : something vulgarly mixed up with women's shops and the four seasons. " Spring Sale : Bargains :—Summer Sale : Bargains !—Autumn Sale . . . "—but why squander space ? No lover of language would admit that one can find " finds " in these over-crowded regions. No, in the romantic eyes of those that use this cryptic word, the collector lives a life of daily hope and almost nightly despair, beside which the hatless existence of stock-brokers becomes a tame thing indeed.

Personally, after a life largely mis-spent in collecting, I boast of a few bargains but still know nothing of these mystic " finds." Always—we know how eternally Hope springs—when I have bought a picture, I have hastily de-framed it and peered behind for my Old Master ; never have I failed to ransack old furniture for secret drawers, where I might discover my over-due wad of bank-notes : but no vandal, no miser, it would seem, has ever held the property on which I have

started " find "-ing operations : or maybe God has meant me to die honest and so saved me from defrauding the last owner.

There was published, a few years before the war, a work on antiques that bore, as optimistic title, *The Bargain Book*. One of its two authors was C. E. Jerningham, remembered as " Marmaduke " of *Truth* : so that I need not add compliments about its worldly wit or qualities as entertainment. Yet, though I once owned a copy, I could never finish it. The book left me—or rather I left it, mid-way—depressed with the tale of so much good fortune on the part of others. A hundred pages were given to their " finds." The fact that these happy bargainites and finders appeared largely as Lord —, Mr. —, or Marquis de —, lent them, perhaps, an added aloofness, helped them to become yet more inhuman. Their habit of constantly getting something for nothing and then gloating over it gave them a god-like dishonesty that grated on my mere human code. I had more sympathy with those humbler souls who, I remember, found sovereigns tucked into the interstices of armchairs by what the authors called our " secretive " ancestors. Poor victims of the " find "-ing mania, how grubby their finger-nails must get in their long optimistic grope !

Not to be long about this, a book that deals confessedly with finds or bargains (for here the authors rightly drew distinctions and had separate headings) is by its very nature much like the delightful *Books of Wonder* and so on that beguiled the late eighteenth century. It must have been thrilling, in those simpler days, to read on page 1 that a cow in Bewdson Step-

worth had borne three adders at a birth. I can well imagine that some minds may still have been exalted by the knowledge, conveyed on page 55, that a cat in the village of Blessby, Staffs, had been born with three heads and one tail: but the appetite was bound to cloy. It is no use building literature around the unexpected. That strains faith and gives indigestion to the mind.

The fact is—if I may leap boldly to the sordid present—that these marvellous finds (I hate inverted commas more even than I loathe this word) are frequently a Press sensation, a substitute for the late sea-serpent and giant gooseberry: sometimes even planned to help a new shop or old advertiser.

It is only worth while discussing the matter rather fully, because even collectors themselves are frequently the victims of this curious delusion. Either they lose faith, having no finds, and fade by the way; or they lose truth and become in their turn arch-finders.

Of these last, I may assure the sceptical, I have met many. Far the most pleasant had in him no boasting: merely a great imaginative uplift, as of some child spoiled by too complaisant Life. Not an object did he possess in his collection, one might almost say, that had not, in reply to a rash or naughty "Where did you get *that?*", its own romantic story. The guest who might expect "In Bond Street," or even a prouder "Under the railway arch in Shepherd's Bush," must be a new visitor for this delightful man. (If these words come to him, it will be—alas!—not through mortal eyes, and he will understand, enjoy, forgive.)

"In Port Said," would come the prompt reply. "We

were just off, and I was hurrying to the quay, when I saw a man—a native, you know—furtively hiding something underneath his arm. Enough showed for me to spot instantly that it was a fine piece of Lowestoft. Imagine, Lowestoft in Port Said ! . . ; I knew nothing hardly of his lingo ; the hooter was going to warn passengers ; I dug out money, pointed at this thing, then at the money. He clearly didn't want to sell ; his eyes filled with tears ; perhaps it was the gift of some Army officer he once had served ; the siren grew still louder ; the sum I offered him was very small ; I pulled out a gold sovereign (of course it was before the war ; there's nothing in Port Said, these days). He grabbed it, pushed the loved object into my arm with a last longing look ; I ran ; the gangways were just being loosened . . . but just look ! "

Perhaps, the thought comes to me at this point, I wronged my friend, just now : for when one duly looked the treasure-trove was almost invariably faked. Perhaps he did not build up word-romances ? Perhaps he actually brought these wild thrills into his life because his imaginative soul was looking for them ? Certainly, those who plant forgeries do not lack enterprise. A century and more has passed since they first sowed the Pyramids deep at their base. Why, then should they stop short of the Port Said quay ?

A less simple, and so less agreeable, find-er is the man of boasts. *He* knows where to look. *He* knows the tricks. The dealers are afraid of *him*. They have learnt not to offer duds. They know *he's* hard to satisfy and so, when they get something good, they put it by, aside, hidden somewhere, till he comes along.

They know *he* won't buy any rubbish. They keep that for others. And the result is that, only the other day, not two miles from Piccadilly . . .

This anecdotal antique-owner may fill a whole bargain-book in life. Connoisseurs who happen to see his collection are almost sure to seek comfort in a tactful mercy. Dealers would be more than honest, they would be imbecile, if they informed him that his yarns were boodle, his treasures much the same. He goes on, happily content and boastful, patronising those who laugh at him behind his back. This man finds his level, one may feel sure, only after death. Then, with his spirit stripped of round belly and conceit, he finds suddenly the bandage slipped and sees in alarm the vast untruth-area of his farcical existence. He lacks, I think, the power to discern redeeming humour, as of a Dickensian clown, in his own terrestrial record. His soul can merely writhe, whilst, in a third-rate auction room, grimy runners and alien-faced dealers turn over with cynical delight his little life-accumulation of forgery, so soon rid of its flattering value when it faces the healthy acid-test of public sale.

But enough of such gloomy imaginings, little fitted to encourage the first or later footsteps of collectors !

Such tragedies are easily avoided by any who will put aside firmly the idea of finds and not be too anxious even about bargains.

Bargains are said to be different from finds in this way (forgive my vagueness, but I have never specialised in either). A bargain is something you buy cheaply, although the dealer gets his price ; a find is something that he may sell you unawares (behind or inside some-

thing else) or in ignorance of its real nature. The distinction, I confess, largely eludes me. Perhaps one might fairly say that finds are gifts from Fate ; bargains are sales by a fool.

In any case, even the bargain is a poor ideal for any true collector. It will surely lead him to a mass of dingy, damaged, ill-assorted junk, unless he shows a self-control that must be almost more than human. In the days when women still dressed instead of slipping happily into a half-concealing smock, many a good woman—or was she, as I think, a " lady " ?—went to the sales and bought bargains as bargains and as nothing else. Nothing cheap was alien to her. She flung the accumulation into a big chest or a bottom drawer : something, at any rate, not too easy to open ; and this was as a joy to her. When her children did charades, they blessed her ways. When the set time for dress-making came round, and they were offered lengths, pom-poms and embroidered panels, they were not so certain.

That is the mentality of the bargain-hunter : anything that is cheap, and I cannot too soon or too firmly dissociate him from the real collector.

Perhaps, indeed, it is scarcely worth while to give more than a paragraph to asking whether most bargains are actually cheap. Obviously a bargain that fits into one's own collection must be admirable ; but I am unable to forget the desolation of an Exhibition of alleged slum-bargains that I saw, some years ago, in London. To be worth buying, antiques must be clean, perfect, contemporary, in mint state. Choice objects do not easily survive the rough treatment of adversity,

A DRESSED PRINT

Gowns of actual material (late 18th century) in high relief upon a coloured print that forms faces, parasol and shoes. 12 in. × 8

PLATE 17 [*Facing p.* 90

and there is no merit in finding their faded remains at however low a price. They have drifted somehow downwards. They are half-way to the dust-bin. Let them go.

The wise plan, rather, is to give up all idea of outwitting people (let us not be squeamish about this business of finds !) ; to pay fair prices ; to trust Time for the rest. A man who is fool enough to follow the crowd and collect what Bond Street buyers are attempting to amass must be a lunatic : but if he finds a new field and makes no effort to be smart with dealers, he is likely to be surprised by the abrupt change of fortune.

I know that, according to tradition, there is an eternal enmity between buyer and dealer : where, otherwise, that find, that bargain ? The more simple-minded of collectors go, indeed, to every sort of artifice as help in this long-standing warfare. They solemnly believe in disparaging an object before buying it. Perhaps, even, they will put it down and take up another. They will certainly not enter, bluntly, and ask how much the silhouette is : they will register ignorance, astonishment, disappointment, doubt, conviction, in their proper order. The idea of being friendly with the dealer is to them a treachery. They mustn't (they mentally declare) PUT ALL THEIR CARDS UPON THE TABLE.

" What is that queer little black thing there ? " they ask, after looking at something of no interest or value as a skilful " blind " for the dense dealer. " Oh ! I see. How amusing ! By who did you say ? . . . Oh, yes . . . And a label ? . . . At the back ? Oh, yes, I see. Rather interesting ? . . . I wish it was a lady :

they're so much more attractive. And I see it's been dropped or something. . . . What's the little teapot? Derby? Rather pretty. But not early, I should say. . . . What were you asking for the little black side-face portrait? Fifty shillings? Good gracious, I thought you would say fifteen! I suppose they're being collected, are they? . . . And the teapot? . . . Really? Are fans worth much now? I've got one at home, very much like that one with the pierced sticks there. How much is that worth? . . ." Etc., etc.

Poor dears, they imagine that there may be a find, a bargain, or even a free fan-valuation—vainly: for the men who become dealers are not, as a class, quite fools. The whole rigmarole is a mere waste of words. Indeed, it actually tempts a dealer, if he be not absolutely honest, to impose upon its users. They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.

Do not imagine me to be maintaining that all dealers may be trusted. Of no class, yet, can such a general statement be seriously made. There are certain shops that the merest novice soon learns to avoid—those with the constant "Sale," the lowered sun-blind, the electric light; those with the masses of "old" knockers, warming-pans, ladles; others more subtle in the dangers that they threaten to collectors. There are, too, men with a bad name in the trade itself. There are shrewd tradesmen who should have dealt in anything but Art; who have no sympathy with the collector; "sell to the first comer: too busy to report"; who, entering his home, will run down valuable objects, in hope that he may sell some, and praise rubbish in the faith that he may buy yet more. But these are the black sheep.

It is no long job to know them from the white. And, as in most flocks, the white are more common.

The man who, from pure tradition, decides to treat dealers as foes—or, less grandly, in the manner of a boy with his masters in a school still cursed by convention—is wantonly throwing away half the pleasure of collecting. Not for nothing do men decide to sell antiques rather than raw meat or herrings. They will be found mostly—even the younger of them—to be characters ; to enjoy talking ; not to talk unless they have something to say. And they have had to study : an ignorant dealer sinks instantly to Carey Street or to the selling of fakes by the ordered bale. He, too, has bought experience.

A dealer, however, has to know about almost everything antique : he cannot control what will be brought to him for purchase. The collector, more fortunate, need only buy what he has decided to study : need study only what he has decided he will buy. Very soon, therefore, unless either an idiot or a snob, he will have learnt from a hundred dealers far more about his one subject than a hundred dealers possibly can learn from him, or from anybody else, about the hundred objects that they have to study.

Here, then—in knowledge, not in luck or in sharp dealing—lies the strength of the real collector. Learning what he can, at first, from dealers ; then buying from them the best only—nothing grimy, nothing damaged—he will find himself rapidly becoming clever on his own little subject ; able to smile secretly at statements by his early tutors ; and Time, as I have hinted, will be his best accomplice.

There is no need to be tedious with examples or statistics on this matter. Most honest dealers would be glad to buy back, at a bigger price, the best stuff that they sold five years ago—yes, and still make a profit by re-selling. I am not a reader of the City page (collectors waste so much time that they must simplify life in the easy ways), but I believe this to be called Appreciation of Capital; without income, truly, but also without tax.

Naturally, those who buy without knowledge from shops that are selling off, or believe the "pedigrees" and family "histories" so lightly given by late owners, will not find the value of their purchases ascending. I refer, from now onward, only to people with knowledge or keen desire to learn, when I use the word "collectors." The others may be labelled, with some precision, as "accumulators," and so dismissed with ignominy from these pages. It is ridiculous to speak always of "the wise collector," "the clever collector," in every other line.

Collectors, then, may feel quite certain that their goods will increase in value: by added age, by greater scarcity, with every year. Records of past prices are kept in auction rooms: and my statement can be proved by innumerable cases. I could prove it, indeed, from my own. For years I bought serious drawing by Rowlandson at the dealers' own prices. I was, I feel sure, thought "a good buyer," *alias* a mug. I did not complain. I did not haggle. I had full faith in Rowlandson and Time. My strength was to sit still. And now I have been overtaken by the market: now, at least, those Rowlandsons, however dear then, have

" RECEPTION GIVEN TO GEORGE III

at Ranelagh by Boodle's Club, 1802 ", in water-colour, by Rowlandson (23 in. × 6)

PLATE 18

[*Facing p.* 94

become " a bargain " ! This is, however, a sordid branch of my subject, not likely to influence the collector. I have brought it forward only as a cure for that ugly mental illness, find-mania, destroying as it does all peace of mind and driving its victim to a series of wild leaps after romantic bargains that suddenly reveal themselves, when the attack has passed, as swindles.

Collecting is not a hectic dash : it is one of the most lasting and most calm pleasures yet invented by the restless soul of man.

Some years ago, one of my nieces paid a short visit to my parents at a time when I found myself at home. She was passing through that dark age in which little girls, obeying some ancestral or symbolic urge, find relief in continually jumping up and down on carpets. During her brief but over-long visit she gave out, between bounces, two heart-cries that I have never found myself able to forget. " I can't get *rid* of myself," she complained, taking breath ; and shortly afterwards, " I can't stop my face from talking."

She spoke well. Those are in very truth the two modern maladies. We look inside ourselves too much : we give out far too many words for what we say. I claim that only by means of solitary collecting is there to be gained full relief from both.

CHAPTER IX

ROWLANDSON

I SHALL, I fear, find it difficult to be brief about Thomas Rowlandson, because, both as a delightful character and as an under-rated artist, he has held chief place in my enthusiasms for long years ; still holds it ; and seems like holding it as long as I may last. It is to be hoped, however, that others, if they can once get rid of the idea of Rowlandson as a mere draughtsman of fat women, or etcher of coarse lampoons shown secretly to " favoured " (?) friends, may find the same interest, human or æsthetic, and pardon me if I become expansive.

Possibly I have—let me confess at once—a bee in my bonnet, even bats plurally in my belfry or whatever may be more extreme in crankdom, about Rowlandson. I think, for instance, that the English have been very stupid in their treatment of a great and singularly English artist. The French and the Americans, with whom his country was at war during his lifetime, have both shown better sense.

I am not, believe me, one of those men so bound by tradition that they feel it a duty to run down their country, their clubs and everything they secretly admire. I have no club—except one where they box—and of my country I am unfashionably proud. Only, are we very wise " on " Art ?

In a snobby and timid admiration for the great works

of foreigners—foreigners alive or dead—does not our country, whether as a nation or as a crowd of people, always put too low a value upon native painters? Is it not, even, a little prone to love size vulgarly and therefore specialise in oils? Those who saw the charming but expensive Pinkie and examined her elbow with attention, or looked closely into some of Lord Iveagh's Romneys, must have wondered whether the vast prices had been dictated by art or by the tape measure only.

Still, these are unpopular reflections. Should I, after all, pursue them further? Now that Rowlandson has had a centenary, our galleries have awakened to the fact that all his finest drawings are in private, and frequently in foreign, hands. Perhaps, too, we are improving? Serious drawings by Rowlandson are fetching big sums at Christie's and Sotheby's these days, and possibly it would not be fair to write now as Ralph Nevill, son of a famous collector, wrote in 1902: "In France, however, where public taste is more highly educated . . . Rowlandson's work is very greatly esteemed as that of a true artist who, in his own line, has rarely, if ever, been equalled." In France, where public taste is more highly educated—surely they do not still order this matter better in France?

Enough gloomy introduction: to my subject! . . .

It has become almost the correct thing to say that we know as little about Rowlandson the man as we do of Shakespeare. In one sense this is true. Both were so popular in their own day—so much, I mean, of the people; lusty and full-blooded and alive and living—that the need never occurred to anybody of a record for the wretched creatures still unborn. After all, how

very little will be known in three or four generations of that great publicist Bernard Shaw himself ! Hundreds of years hence a later Frank Harris will be writing " Shaw The Man," dug heftily from G.B.S.'s provocative plays, humorous letters to the Press, and cynically self-lauding remarks to would-be interviewers. Where will he find, in all this, the man's Celtic kindliness and great humanity ? A legend will be born, and Shaw be buried well beneath it, in the privacy that his secret self has possibly always desired. More, on the other hand, will be known about less vital men who are now very near nonentities. So it has been, in one sense, with Thomas Rowlandson. All England knew him in his own day ; he himself saw to that ; and now we know almost nothing. In 1880, nearly a hundred and thirty years after the artist's birth, Joseph Grego produced a vast tome in two volumes, *Rowlandson The Caricaturist*. It would be pleasant to praise this work ; but I can, after many years' knowledge of it, pay tribute only to the author's industry. Never have I been able to digest his book as reading-fodder. Its repetitions and vile arrangement clog the appetite : its style revolts the taste. " The caricaturist," he writes, " began to draw his first instalments from the fount of knowledge at the scholastic symposium of Doctor Barvis in Soho Square," (etc.). . . After ninety-five pages of this he gives the remainder, some seven hundred, to a list of published work arranged under years : and such an attempt, as may be realised, was bound to be a failure in the case of any artist so fruitful and erratic as poor Rowlandson with all his gambling debts and worldly delights.

ROCHESTER CASTLE,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (15 in. × 11)

PLATE 19

[*Facing p.* 98

Yet, after many years of search for new facts about this artist, I have frankly to admit that Grego had found most of them. A row of vast books stands in my study—*The Reminiscences of Henry Angelo ; Angelo's Picnic ;* the collected opuscula of " Peter Pindar " ; *The Somerset House Gazette :* Adolphus's *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian*—all throwing much light on Rowlandson's social world and sometimes a little on the man himself : but none seems to have altogether escaped Grego's notice. The pity is that he made such poor use, first, of so much good material. One may, or might conceivably, read all through Grego's tomes, and then feel that one knew less than ever about the Rowlandson that matters. I shall not quote much from Grego. Sparing my readers, I pulled up half-way even in that one sentence about the " scholastic symposium " and those " first instalments from the fount of knowledge."

Angelo's *Reminiscences* alone, of the others, I find it impossible altogether to resist. Angelo, an old Etonian, a distinguished swordsman and the foremost fencing-master of an age that could ill afford bad fencing, claims naïvely in his preface to have " seen life," having " mixed with princes and peers—I say it with reverence and respect." Retiring to the country after fifty years of work, with no resource but a " long-thrummed guitar," he very soon became bored with " the changed life of the once well-known Angelo." One cure, then as now, for this symptom of retirement : to write reminiscences !

This time, there is no place for regret. Any collector who can find a copy of *The Reminiscences of Henry Angelo*, whether in the 1830 edition or as reprinted,

(Kegan Paul ; 1904 : 2 vols : 68 plates,)—especially if it be the edition on hand-made paper, limited to seventy-five copies for England and America—has a great treat to come. Angelo wrote in lively spirit of a lively age ; he knew Rowlandson well ; and this edition of his book includes many of that artist's serious drawings in colour, as well as a fine tinted portrait of him by his friend John Raphael Smith. A book, believe me, to possess :—even if, for instance, the drawing named " Eton " is really one of Old Kew Palace !

Angelo explains how Rowlandson and he became acquainted at the school in Soho Square and remained, with their school-fellow John Bannister the comedian, " inseparable companions." (Vol. I : p. 180 ; Kegan Paul reprint.)

" Every one," he continues, " at all acquainted with the arts must well know the caricature works of that very eccentric genius : the extent of his talent, however, as a draughtsman is not so generally known. . . . His powers indeed were so versatile, and his fancy so rich, that every species of composition flowed from his pen with equal facility. . . ." After repeating the current rumour that his facility had been, indeed, his ruin, Angelo continues : " he has sketched or executed more subjects of real scenes, in his original rapid manner, than any ten artists his contemporaries, and etched more plates than any artist, ancient or modern." Yet, of his compositions for the Royal Academy he records that they were " carried through with a compatibility of style so original and so replete with painter-like feeling, that Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. West pronounced them wonders of art."

I must not linger, although much more tempts me :—Rowlandson's visit with him, " immediately after the death of Louis the Fifteenth," to Paris, where " everything, to an English eye, bore the appearance of a burlesque," but Rowlandson managed to " burlesque even the burlesque " ;—the elder Bannister's failure to be in time for the original drawings of the Italian and French Families, so that " he had to solace himself with the coloured prints, which were touched upon by the hand of Rowlandson," though J. R. Smith engraved them, and how, later, this pair of prints passed to Lord Barrymore :—how " Rolly " sketched the delicious episode of Mr. Higginson, " who seemed to live upon his wits " and borrowed Angelo's black suit, because he " knew it would fit him to a T " ;—about the big collection of Rowlandson's drawings made by Mr. Mitchell, " the quondam banker, a most facetious, fat gentleman " ;—or how, as Rowlandson toured France, Flanders and Holland, " his mighty stature astonished the many, but none more than the inn-keepers' wives, who, on his arrival, as he travelled in style, looked at the larder, then again at the guest," and how " all regarded him as that reported being, of whom they had heard, the veritable Mister Bull " ; or (finally, it must be, lest I seem like a village preacher as to farewell promises) how he well remembers sitting in the facetious banker's " comfortable apartment, listening to the stories of my old friend Peter Pindar, whose wit seemed not to kindle until after midnight, at the period of about his fifth or sixth glass of brandy and water. Rowlandson, too, having nearly accomplished his twelfth glass of punch and replenishing his pipe with

choice *Oronooko*, would chime in. The tales of these two gossips, each delectable to hear, would make a modern *Boccaccio*."

If only the other boon-companions of " Rolly," professed experts in either portraiture or words, had done half so well as this old fencing-master !

But does it really matter ? Do we not already know enough, whether by actual report or by trustworthy deduction ? We know that he lived from 1756 to 1827, a period of loose gaiety followed by the Napoleonic scare and (if I may use this phrase) post-war morals, then the inevitable reaction from them. Equally, we have his pictures. Let me lump what is thus to be learnt with what our authors tell us ; then attempt my own modest portrait and biography.

As the son of a prosperous merchant in Old Jewry, Rowlandson was naturally educated at a decent school, from which Angelo could pass to Eton. Bannister and he, however, went on to study at the Royal Academy, where they disgraced themselves by teasing poor Richard Wilson, then librarian, and shooting peas at the plump female models. This conduct, less scandalous when we remember that boys then left school at a very early age, did not prevent him from gaining a big reputation at the Royal Academy as pupil. He returned to study there after two years in the studios and streets of Paris.

Unluckily he had a French aunt who spoiled him : got him across to Paris far too young, because his father had a financial disaster ; threw him at sixteen into a city which Angelo darkly states was " more original and amusing " before the Revolution ; and finally left

THE COUNTRY HOUSE,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (17 in. × 11)

PLATE 20

[*Facing p.* 102

him what was then the big fortune of £7,000. Rowlandson, a born gambler, or possibly taught whilst in Paris, squandered that and much more in a short period of time. We are told that he gave no sign on his face when losing. Why should he ? Like his friend George Morland (one Rowlandson portrait of whom is in the British Museum, another in my collection), he had always pen and pencil to redeem his fortunes. Gambling and drink never led him to dishonesty ; merely to harder work—which may upset some moral tales of the Victorian age.

Enormous in stature, as we have already heard, healthy-looking, handsome, muscular, with strong features, firm chin and flashing eyes—if these legends were all realised in fact, he must indeed have seemed, not only " Mister Bull," but the very hero-model for all Adelphi melodramas yet to come. And popularity with a big circle, the chance to travel, a gift of tongues, growing success, plenty of money, a rich vein of humour—what more could any young man wish ? No wonder he loved life !

He loved more than life. He loved man. " Caricaturist," certainly, though by no means always ; but satirist—never ! None of Hogarth's venom, none of his hate, none of his proselytising morals ! Rowlandson laughed at life, because he loved it ; he never sneered in malice. And he loved more than men. He loved dogs. No one could study his serious drawings for long and not discover that. He used them certainly for purposes of composition (to this I shall come later), but he did more than that. He put them in for love ; he put them in with sympathetic humour ; he put

them in, as no other artist that occurs to me has done, because to him, as to any decent dog-lover, they formed a real, essential part of any human scene. How different from Hogarth's inappropriate and unseemly dogs, starved and misbehaving, are Rowlandson's great bouncing mongrels, who prance excitedly ahead and murmur " Come on " to their masters !

Jovial and easy-going, he was no hater, but more probably a sentimentalist in secret. We find him with a crowd of laughter-loving friends. One of them, " Ephraim Hardcastle "—really Pyne the painter of " Royal Residences " fame—has left a delicious cameo of Rowlandson and Gillray, the two alleged man-biters, in conjunction. (I take it from a long article, " Reminiscences of Artists," in *The Somerset House Gazette*, Vol. I., page 409, which the curious will find at the British Museum (B.M. P.P. 1825). The volume is not worth buying.)

" Few men have been more execrable or contemptible in private life than those who have lived by satirising their contemporaries. . . . Peter Pindar was a mercenary sensualist and died a hoary reprobate." (The reference is to Dr. Wolcot, a divine). " Anthony Pasquin was a literary ruffian and a nuisance in society. . . . Gillray, however, must not be mixed with this wicked fraternity. . . . He never sought, like that low coxcomb Morland, to become king of the company. . . . Rowlandson, his ingenious compeer, and he sometimes met. They would, perhaps, exchange half-a-dozen questions and answers upon the affairs of copper and aqua-fortis ; swear all the world was one vast masquerade ; and then enter into the common chat of the

ENTRANCE TO THE MALL

(Spring Gardens), by Rowlandson, in water-colour (18½ in. × 13). A delicate drawing full of movement, skilfully aided by the exact placing of a dog

PLATE 21

[*Facing p.* 104

room, smoke their cigars, drink their punch, and sometimes early, sometimes late, shake hands at the door—look up at the stars, say, ' It's a frosty night,' and depart one for the Adelphi, the other to St. James's Street, each to his bachelor's bed."

No, Rowlandson was not a hater. The world to him seemed one great masquerade below the stars. Was he not, rather, a romantic ? Perhaps his amusements were a trifle witless, but he was of his age ; and maybe we cannot afford to boast much of our alleged gaiety to-day.

In his twentieth year this fortunate young man, already loaded with the praise of great contemporaries, had his first picture hung by the Royal Academy, and that in an age of great artists. It must be remembered that he lived in the days of Gainsborough and Reynolds ; was born in the same year as Raeburn, died in the same year as Blake ; nor did Bond Street and Pall Mall bristle then with rival exhibitions. The painting with which he won his honour had as title, *Delilah payeth Samson a visit in his Prison at Gaza*. This I take to have been an oil painting for I have seen more than one early attempt in oil. In any case, it must have been a serious composition, befitting this youth flown with Reynolds' praise. For several years after 1775 he sent, from a studio at 133, Wardour Street, water-colour landscapes and small portraits to the Royal Academy. One of the portraits was called *Lady in a Fancy Dress*. Unhappily in 1784 he sent, not only the beautiful and famous *Vauxhall Gardens*, but also two compositions that sounded the note of caricature more loudly, *Italian Family* and *The Serpentine River*, a boisterous skating scene.

The Press, strangely reticent about his serious work, was utterly delighted. The *Morning Chronicle* on May 21st contemptuously dismissed the earlier caricaturist Collet, just dead, as a man who " could freeze out three or four faces," but those without any " variety of combinations," and praised Rowlandson as making " more lucky attempts, to which in their order we give praise." On June 1st we find this same paper returning to the big drum, thus : " Rowlandson's *Italian Family* and *Vauxhall* and *Serpentine* certainly excel in an accomplishment which is very rare : the shew of humour. All his pieces we have commended for the same good quality." Rowlandson, still well under thirty, was naturally flattered. He abandoned portraits or set pieces and went on in the new line—a line of least resistance, of most praise, and no doubt highest profits.

The Press went on being delighted. " Thomas Rowlandson," we read in *The European Magazine* for July, 1786, " has again charmed us with his exhibits : *French Family*, *Opera House Gallery*, *Coffee House*, *English and French Reviews*. His method of drawing such scenes, together with his inimitable humour, entitles him to first place among his contemporaries." (Big words indeed in such a period of art ! After all, Gainsborough could draw, if Romney couldn't. . . .) " It is indeed a great pity we are not treated to more of this artist's work." " Rowlandson appears in great form this year," begins chattily another critic ; " it may be truly said that his drawings are tinted in the most consummate of tones." He goes on to mention *The English Review* and *The French Review* as " two really noble

drawings carefully framed for the Royal Collection "—a comment of interest, as these two lively, if slightly overcrowded, compositions are still at Windsor Castle, in His Majesty's possession, along with many others bought by George III.

This critic, however, keeps his sting at the end. "They naturally had a good dash of caricature, but were free from coarseness and by far the best I had ever seen from his hand."

"*Naturally!*"

Rowlandson was labelled, docketed, destroyed. Soon he would be etching cheap and coarse lampoons for Tegg, to whet the public's vulgar taste. And when his first champion arose, he would give two volumes up to ugliness and call them *Rowlandson the Caricaturist*.

No more pictures were sent to the Royal Academy after 1787, in which year he sent four comic drawings. Thanks to kind friends, Rowlandson had found his level, and would emerge from it only in his latter days with help from Ackermann.

What, it may be asked, had become of his John Bull doggedness, impressive chin and flashing eye? Why, in other words, had he so little resolution? The answer is no doubt, largely, that he was a gambler and he needed money; but I think also that, in spite of much praise, he remained a modest man.

Among the documents unknown to Grego, that have come my way in a long hunt, there is one that seems to throw light on this matter. It is Pugin's own copy, bearing his book-plate, of *The Microcosm of London*, published by Ackermann in three volumes between 1808 and 1810. As everybody knows, this magnificent

survey of London in colour contains over 100 aquatints which were arrived at by collaboration between Rowlandson and Pugin. The famous expert on Gothic architecture drew the background, Rowlandson put in the figures, and Pyne, I believe, added the letterpress necessary under a convention of that age.

My copy throws a strong light on the method pursued, exactly, in producing this delightful work, which every London-lover should possess before the print-sellers wreck all existing copies in order to sell the plates, at even greater profit, separately. Pugin has bound up, in venial pride, not only the complete book as issued and all the aquatints in proof before colour (often before letters), but also a mass of original material. There are, I make out, close on 120 drawings bound into the three volumes. A few of these are detail studies by Pugin only, in ink or water-colour, but nearly all are fine pencil drawings, of amazing delicacy, in which Pugin has drawn the building or place required, then Rowlandson has pencilled, or at times inked, in the figures. Hours could be spent instructively in studying these drawings, which are exactly the same size as the published plates, and I myself could fill pages with the ideas that they suggest to me : Pugin, with his astounding Teutonic detail, yet touched with a fairy lightness when the chance is offered him, as by the Abbey roof ; Rowlandson, with his inspired slap-dash rightness, his delicious, enviable speed of line. Perhaps, too, being merely human, I could fill some pages with reminiscent pride : recalling the cleverness with which, on short leave from the trenches of France, I spent my accumulated pay on these unique volumes,

VAUXHALL GARDENS

A page from Pugin's copy of *The Microcosm of London*. His delicate pencil-work scarcely emerges; but Rowlandson's swift, vital line is admirably seen

PLATE 22 [*Facing p.* 108

not on a tenth visit to the Bing Boys, six night clubs and a cell in Vine Street. True, I paid what then seemed to me a fortune; but (take note, you "Find"-expecters!) now, a bare twelve years later, I should be lucky if I bought at five times as much. Possibly, too, I could wax philosophic, remembering how these volumes, that carry with them some of the history of Art, were left by me, when I went back to France, at my mother's home in Horsham; and so, with the few other treasures—largely silhouettes—in my own war-time den there, escaped what I have come to call, though blamelessly, "my" fire of 1919, in which many fine drawings by Rowlandson were lost to the world for ever.

What rambling egotism! Collectors may be shy about themselves and diffident as to their own work, but they are never modest about their possessions. If so, they would cease collecting.

As these pencil drawings, then, passed between Pugin, Rowlandson and Ackermann, a great many remarks were written, pencilled equally, around their margins. Now Rowlandson in 1808 was a man of fifty-two, and six years senior to Pugin. He was famous both as artist and as popular cartoonist: well-known, as rarely happens, both to the few and to the many. He had many excuses for conceit. Yet see what happens.

Pugin throughout takes up a lofty attitude, as if the priest of high art dictating to a low-down fellow. "This group of figures to be left out," are his curt instructions on the drawing of Somerset House; not less peremptory his "No figures in this Gallery" on that of the Quakers' Meeting (of which I have drawings in pencil and rough water-colour, the finished drawing, proof

before colour and completed aquatint). Only on *St. Luke's Hospital* is his comment qualified: "The figures near rather too small," but he adds, more brusquely, "The Master is more of a gentleman." This double attack leads Rowlandson to make a special water-colour sketch of the asylum, with larger figures, specially, it would seem, for Pugin, as it is bound into his private copy.

What, then, when we turn to Rowlandson? Does he retort: "This building too small. . . . No balustrade to hide the figures," or something of that sort? He does not. Only once does he make any criticism of his junior, Pugin, this Royalist refugee from France just establishing himself in England under the patronage of Nash, and then it is in modest terms. "With submission to Mr. Pugin's better judgement" (he writes above the "Covent Garden Market" election) "Mr. Rowlandson conceives, if the light came in the other side of ye picture, the figures woud be sett off to better advantage."

Such diffidence is amazing, and the more so when one has handled, as I have in several cases, the drawings by Rowlandson for this book—drawings in water-colour, not in pencil—and compared them with the "finished" product after they had been through the hands of Pugin. I am thinking especially of Rowlandson's lively drawing for *Chapel Royal, Whitehall*, full of architectural suggestion and vivid characters, the whole pulsing with life. It is pathetic to compare this with the finished drawing (also in my collection), of which the published aquatint is only too faithful a copy.

"LORD HOWE'S VICTORY."

"French Prizes lying at Spithead": thus inscribed by Rowlandson. Size: 17 in. × 12: water-colour

PLATE 23

[*Facing p.* 110

Perhaps some readers will not think this matter of *The Microcosm* much of an argument in favour of Rowlandson's retiring nature and its use to explain the ease with which he climbed down from the Royal Academy to popular lampoons ; but there is more than this. Search of many years, in catalogues, in book-shops, in musems, has led me to believe that, for a man famous in his lifetime, Rowlandson left singularly little manuscript. Certainly he wrote, and well. His signatures, as now found on drawings by him and on many " by a later hand," are largely faked, for Rowlandson himself signed strangely few even of his most important works (another proof, perhaps, of modesty ?), but he delighted to cover his little personal ribaldries, such as he might enclose in letters, with vitriolic comments in a good hand. Even the originals of more ambitious caricatures, designed for publication, often bear many lines of writing. Rowlandson, indeed, can probably claim to be the inventor of the " literary " caricature as an art-form. I have heard more than one admirer of Max Beerbohm's delightful exercises in this form give Max the credit of first mingling literature and drawing on a single sheet of paper, but such inscriptions as " Bacon-Faced Fellows of Brasen Nose Broken Loose," " Dying for Love, or Captain Careless shot Flying by a Girl of Fifteen who unexpectedly popped her head out of a Casement " (to take two at random from a pile of prints), prove by their rhythm and economy of words that Rowlandson possessed a literary sense. If more proof should seem needed, there is in the British Museum (with sketches of two heads, one smiling, one lugubrious) his excellent letter—half comedy and half

shrewd business—to Heath the engraver, from No. 1, St. James Street, Adelphi, dated March 1st, 1804 :

" Friend Heath,

" 'Tis with great sorrow I relate that my own finances, and the little sway I have with the long-pursed gentry, oblige me to retire before the plays are ended. I hope you will not say as they do at Drury Lane : ' No money returned after the curtain is drawn up.'

" Your bill sent in says ' nine numbers.' Eight only have been received. The ninth mentioned in your bill, being delivered November the first, since my return to Town, has through some mistake never come to hand.

" I also possess a receipt from you of two guineas, and as I hope you will call me a trader, and poor, you will make out a fresh bill and that we shall verify the old proverb of ' Short reckonings make long friends.'

" I remain sincerely,

" Yours,

" Thos. Rowlandson."

" James Heath, Engravers,
" Upper Charlotte Street,
" Fitzroy Square."

This excellent prescription for evading the remainder of a dull set of volumes, to which one has unluckily subscribed—a prescription of levity and system equally compounded—proves, I submit, that Rowlandson, like many good artists, could write. That he seems to have written very little, publicly or privately, seems to point, I think, to a diffident nature

which may explain what has hitherto appeared as a mystery in his career.

If my theory is correct Rowlandson, the darling of the Royal Academy school and honoured later by its hanging committee, soon enough submerged under gambling debts and thrown among a group of scoffers, found no strong ambition or self-confidence with which he might resist the overtures of Tegg, successful vendor of cheap prints. Rowlandson the artist gave up an early struggle and became Rowlandson the "great," the popular, caricaturist.

Rowlandson lived in a coarse, selfish age, and made no claim to be in any way above those around him. It is a little pharisaical to blame him. I hope that if England, who has put up memorials to so many nonentities, should ever decide to raise a tardy stone somewhere to Rowlandson, it may be phrased in Christian spirit and lapidary style, somewhat as follows :

To the honour of

THOMAS ROWLANDSON

(born July —, 1756 : died April 22, 1827)

a good old fashioned

ENGLISHMAN.

He was a big, handsome, man.
He worked hard, lived hard, drank hard.
He was crude, extravagant, full-blooded.
He would not listen to his elders.
He liked jokes, rum-punch and the hazard room.
He turned aside from the Academy,
to make laughter for those who laughed with him
and to show England as it was
to such as should come after.
He gambled and got drunk, but it is recorded
that he owed no man anything and swindled none.

AN INCURABLE COLLECTOR

He loved men and adored dogs.
He was never mean.
He died at the proper age,
with enough but not too much money in the Bank.
His sin lay in being true to his own times
and thus shocking later smugness.
He was a lewd, weak, human fellow.
He was very much like you and me.
May men be more kind to his memory
and God give him peace.

CHAPTER X

COLLECTING ROWLANDSON

AT this point a truculent reader or Lector, such as writers of old used pleasantly to imagine, might remark: "Yes, that's all very well. You've hugely enjoyed writing all that about Rowlandson. But what of *us?* We did not set out to read a book about art or on any white-washed roysterer. We want to hear about collecting. We want to be told of something we can buy." "Certainly, my dear sir," I reply with a courtly grace suited to this resuscitated gentleman. "You shall have a chapter on collecting—Rowlandson!"

* * * *

The easiest and cheapest form of collecting Rowlandson would be, then, to buy his printed caricatures. It would be far the easiest: easily the dullest. Rowlandson was a bad caricaturist, except in his serious drawings. In these his touch of good-humoured fun lends infinite relief to the figures in his fore-ground: but when he sets out to be satiric, nothing at all happens. For that one needs Hogarth. Rowlandson had humour: like H. M. Bateman in our own day, he could make a drawing funny even if it had no inscription over it or joke below: but he was more pleased than angry with the follies of his day. "What fun," as the vapid nowadays remark. Therefore it follows that his social caricatures were cold-hearted; whilst as to the political, they are the wettest of damp squibs.

Napoleon, and so on, pah! The genial Rowlandson cared for no such bogey-men. He merely drew the things for gambling money.

Nor would this be wise collecting, even by a man who professed to care more for profit than for art. The caricatures issued by Tegg were a burlesque, at any rate, of the originals, as comparison soon proves: whilst the few printed by Reeve and Jones, by Rowlandson himself from the Adelphi, or even by that excellent printer, Ackermann, are but little better. Moreover, they were popular, issued in great numbers. I shall be surprised if such a collection ever would increase in value. I may be reminded that one did sell, actually, for close upon five hundred pounds at auction, a little while ago. I do not forget, but I remember also that it contained some thousand specimens in fine condition. Ten shillings a head is no very great price, after all, at the end of so big an adventure. I wonder what they cost their owner? . . . Often I see quite poor prints, in back-street shops, priced up to very near a pound. I cannot believe them to be worth more or likely to increase in value. At any rate, while one was waiting sordidly, they would be a depressing drawerful.

Much less miserable, and probably far more profitable, would be the collecting of Rowlandson's original drawings for these comic prints; drawings such as that which forms my frontispiece and was named by Rowlandson himself *Money Lenders* but may well represent an incurable collector. However slap-dash Rowlandson might be as an etcher, he could scarcely avoid giving pleasure when he took up, even in haste, his reed pen. The line in some of these swift drawings

WAITING FOR NAPOLEON,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (17 in. × 11)

PLATE 24

[*Facing p.* 116

is delicious, as all must admit who have seen *The Exhibition Stare-Case*, lent by Professor Tonks to the Tate Gallery. This may be in the abstract a most vulgar production—a cascade of well-covered, if underdressed, Society women falling down the new steep steps of the Royal Academy to the open delight of ogling macaronis —but in practice it is so admirably conceived and carried out, its sweeping movement and free curve, that even the severest critics have admitted it a thing of beauty. Personally I am green with envy of Professor Tonks, though I outwardly profess to believe that I should feel relief if every comic drawing by Rowlandson could be destroyed by our busy Law-makers under some new clause of D.O.R.A., thus setting this artist free from his wretched label of " caricaturist." Perhaps that, even, is not quite sincere : for, claiming to collect " only serious drawings," I have a small pile of these others, and three at least of them do give me real pleasure. Easily first would come a large drawing that has been engraved as one of the " Miseries of Life " series, though I am scandalously uncertain of its actual title. The misery in question is, however, clear. A wretched man in uniform is lunching as guest at a long oval table that holds fourteen people. Around him and about him surges a battalion of small children. One is on his knee, with a firm stranglehold upon his neck ; another thrusts a grimy doll up in his face ; a third is tugging his peruke. Others beat drums, blow trumpets, cause pet dogs to bark, and so on, whilst at the doorway an opulent looking nurse bears in triumphantly a brace of twins. This scene, which is as usual conceived in too jovial a spirit to

have the bite of satire, is carried out with such easy rapidity that, as one looks at it, one finds a finger following instinctively its curves and involutions. The whole thing is, in fact, full of movement—one of Rowlandson's great secrets—there is nothing dead or stagnant anywhere, no formal stiffness, though it holds close on thirty figures. Mantel ornaments, chandelier, the staircase in the outer hall, such details are put in with a masterly sweep of the pen. Finally, having suggested delightfully two large oil-paintings on the wall behind, Rowlandson, as if in a cynical desire to hurt, takes his pen and scribbles at the bottom of their frames, "Mr. Breedwell" and "Mrs. Breedwell": the first in capitals and then, as if bored by so much toil, the other in his own cursive hand!

In the second he shows more restraint, but no less sense of motion. A huge cask or vat is falling from the crane that held it. A crowd below is scattering in panic. All, notably a dog, seem to have emerged: but I think an old pot-bellied gentleman is doomed to get the cask on his grand yellow waistcoat. The drawing is tall and, high above, one sees the brewery hands recoiling at various levels in alarm. Every figure is placed with astounding skill to suggest disruption. I do not know whether Rowlandson drew this for publication, (I bought it at Christie's where it was catalogued "A Fall in Beer," I know not on what authority) but if so, he must have been carried away, and interested beyond his wont, by this problem in spacing. Its composition is worthy of a loftier theme, nor has Rowlandson scribbled any humour as a title to it.

About the last I must be more brief, and luckily I

LANDING AT GREENWICH,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (22 in. × 13). A foreground of gross caricature is redeemed by the movement of its groups and the cruciform arrangement of the background

PLATE 25

[*Facing p.* 118

can refer readers to a book which will not only give them a reproduction of it but afford much delightful information on this whole subject of humorous draughtsmanship : Mr. Bohun Lynch's *A History of Caricature* (Faber and Gwyer, 1926), plate 9, " General Howe and Miss——." Much goes with the loss of colour, but the artist's amazing freedom can be seen in his treatment of the mantelpiece, the clock, the fender, scarcely less than in his handling of the two figures, grotesque and beautiful. " His exquisite draughtsmanship and elegance " is a phrase used by Mr. Lynch about Rowlandson, whom he describes as " a landscape painter of great distinction " : but I shall not quote further for fear of keeping lazy readers from the book itself and thus robbing them of pleasure.

Certainly a collector with both tact and knowledge might get together a set of such comic drawings by Rowlandson that should have real artistic merit and not morally offend the nostril : nor need he spend extravagantly, for they are much less sought after than the serious drawings. He might find a certain overlapping, as in the circular designs of " sports," which Rowlandson is said to have carried out for George III. These do not avoid the tinge of caricature, yet are carried out with a fine solidity (see Plate 34), that might fairly rank them among serious drawings.

Books illustrated by Rowlandson would be a costly but entertaining hobby. It would be costly, not through the multitude of such collections (I doubt if there are many), but through the damnable habits of print-sellers. These gentry, as I have hinted, find that single aquatints sell better than whole books and

bring in bigger profits. Therefore their floor is strewn with broken bindings of fine volumes and in their windows you may read: "Westminster Abbey, original aquatint by Rowlandson and Pugin; 2 guineas." This particular collector, therefore, would have the satisfaction of feeling that he had done some good. The time will come, possibly before his death, when even print-sellers will realise (or am I optimistic?) that these beautiful volumes ought not to have been thus destroyed and were among our best memorials of their time. Meanwhile, if he would have to pay dear for them, he can be certain, absolutely certain, that their value will increase, for they get scarcer with each passing year and every window full of prints.

Even now some of the prices will astound him. There are books for which he might have to pay very close upon a hundred pounds, or would be lucky if he paid nearer fifty. This may be understood in the case of *The Microcosm of London*, the three magnificent volumes to which I have fully alluded: but is more puzzling in the case of *A Compendious Treatise on Modern Education* (Smeeton: 1802), which holds only eight plates. These are described as "By J. B. W." (Woodward), but Rowlandson had a habit of etching Woodward, Nixon, Wigstead, Bunbury and others in such personal fashion that they "came out" Rowlandsons and rank in catalogues as such.

This so-called "Treatise" is not as serious as it sounds, being by "the late Rev. Joel M'cringer, D.D., Rector of the United Parishes of Pigworth, Goosebridge, etc.," nor can I find any excessive humour

that might excuse its price. I have seen it marked at £80: and though I once saw it, not long since, catalogued at sixteen guineas, and spent 2*s* on a taxi, someone else had seen it before me. The value of this book remains to me a puzzle. Perhaps the Rev. J. M'cringer prophetically limited his edition, like the obscure poetasters of to-day who win fame, at least in the book-seller's catalogue, by being "scarce" in proportion to the fewness of the copies that they print and sell.

No one, however, could complain of paying a big sum for books illustrated by Rowlandson that are, in reality, a great deal cheaper. *The Loyal Volunteers of London and Environs*, with ninety coloured plates, (Ackermann, 1798,) is a book of absolute delight, magnificent officers and spotless men displaying the manual, platoon, and even funeral exercises fitted for Napoleon's reception: but I do not think that twenty-five pounds would be demanded for it—unless one went to a print-seller and asked for the plates separately!

The nosey Dr. Syntax I have always felt to be a terrific bore, and I believe Rowlandson to have thought the same, for this, if his most famous, is his dullest work, increasingly in every spun-out volume. Myself, next to my *Microcosm*, I enjoy most often a book in which Grego declared Rowlandson not to rise "above the commonplace": *The Dance of Life*, with twenty-six plates in colour (Ackermann, 1817). Perhaps these designs are less striking, by the very subject, than those for the two-volume English *Dance of Death*, the grim if monotonous masterpiece of horror that preceded them by one year: but they have a fresh atmosphere of English life, of English country-side,

that I find very pleasant. This book would probably cost less than *The Loyal Volunteers* and is well worth possessing, for any one who has other things to read. Enjoying Rowlandson's gay hunt-scene and then turning to Combe's doggerel,

> The Hounds the flying Stag pursue
> But Dian does the Hunting rue,

provides the same emotion as emerging from the wonders of a German film to read an English caption, " Love turns, as is its wont, to scornèd hate." All generations have their own tragedies of pleasure. It is only fair to add that Combe's letters prove him to have written this stuff to fit the illustrations.

Collectors who want literature with their art need not, however, abandon Rowlandson. Ackermann, saving Rowlandson from his worst self, kept him busy on good work. In the very same year as *The Dance of Life* there was published a new edition of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, with twenty-four designs in colour by Rowlandson, delightfully English again, full of rural simplicity, proper sentiment and humour well controlled. Equally—for I must not waste too much time or space on my imaginary book-collector—Rowlandson drew illustrations for *Tom Jones* (Longman, 1805, three volumes), though these are not in colour ; for *Peregrine Pickle*, for *Hudibras*, and for other classics of his time. He also visited such places as Brighton and Scarborough, putting the result between covers ; helped to illustrate a handsome book on *Naples and the Campagna Felice* (Ackermann, 1815) ; published volumes of landscape drawings, cries of London, country characters, and so on ; added portraits to

JULIERS IN WESTPHALIA

View of the market-place, with long inscription, by Rowlandson in water-colour (24 in. × 15)

PLATE 26

[*Facing p.* 122

political pamphlets; did fencing and broadsword pictures for treatises by Angelo; and generally proved himself here, too, both versatile and energetic.

This seems to me, for any one who has money and book-space to spare, an interesting, useful and not too hackneyed collection, of which the value will increase enormously in a short span of time. If some of the volumes are alarmingly expensive, others, as I know from experience, may still be picked up for a few shillings. Many a small book of the early nineteenth century, if opened, will reveal at the very least a coloured folding frontispiece in which Rowlandson has had some share. From them, too, even more than I have so far hinted may be learnt about the artist's relation to his contemporaries—Bunbury, Woodward and the others. In Tegg's edition of *Chesterfield Travestie* the ten caricatures are described as " Engraved by Woodward from original Drawings by Rowlandson," and all are indeed authentic Rowlandson with but the slightest touch of Woodward. Yet when, as in the coloured folding frontispiece to *The Lecture on Heads*, Rowlandson etches a drawing by Woodward, poor Woodward equally does not appear. This gay and vital picture of a crowded four-tier theatre, with lecturer and heads complete on stage, is (one would swear) the purest Rowlandson—and, I may add, well worth picking up, in Charing Cross Road or from a posted catalogue, for the few shillings likely to be asked at present.

Yet, approach the matter how one may, always it comes back to this. However difficult to find and costly, the serious drawings are the real Rowlandson

for any genuine collector. They have many claims for this: their very scarceness; their greater beauty; above all, their astounding problems. What more tedious than to study a subject about which one can know everything within five years? Collectors must always beware of the blind-alley subject.

With Rowlandson, at first, the road seems very short and strait. Here is an artist with an apparent passion for what the expert calls "documentation." He signs even tiny sketches; nay, he adds the date. What more can any one expect? How dull, how limiting to private enterprise and all research!

Never was there a greater delusion. These dates often contradict history; worse still, they are no less seldom later than the prints that were made from them, or else earlier in date than their watermarks. In brief, they are worse than useless.

Mr. Oppé, discussing the point in *Thomas Rowlandson: His Drawings and Water-colours* (an excellent book with which I shall deal later), decides that some of these dates and inscriptions may have been "jokes or deliberate mis-statements for the purposes of sale," but that "the most charitable and most probable explanation is that both were jotted down by Rowlandson himself at the end of his life, when his memory was failing."

I fear that I may be thought to lack charity entirely, but I must cleave to my opinion, which has been firm for many years. Long study of my own specimens, where signed, and those of others, makes me quite certain that nearly all signatures alleged to be Rowlandson's are forged. This is a big statement and surprising,

but I could write a whole book in its support. Cornering Mr. Bohun Lynch, himself an artist, I brought out my exhibits, as they say in law courts, a year or two ago, and totally convinced him that some of the signatures, which seemed at first sight convincing, were not even in the ink tinged with vermilion that Rowlandson almost invariably used. There is a splendidly free autograph in the front of a book, containing old engravings of fountains, that belonged to this artist and may now be seen, on request, at the Victoria and Albert Museum (93-C-146). It runs "Thos Rowlandson," with an "s" rather heart-shaped and an "8" (in the date,) formed backwards, but—here is the point—it is written, even in a book, with the familiar vermilion ink. That recent signers should persist so often in black ink watered down may seem to denote very clumsy forging; but most collectors do not seem to worry, so why should the forger? Perhaps he believes that Rowlandson's ink may have aged or faded red, and hopes that his, in God's good time, will follow its example?

Rowlandson, then (let's have it in italics), *seldom signed his serious pictures*, though most of them bear signatures to-day. Many of these have been added of late years, for—testing the matter on a trivial drawing—I find that water, dashingly brushed over it, will move the new signature without disturbing the old paint. Frequently (and this forms a third argument against authenticity) these names are scrawled across some vital foreground of a landscape in a dire manner that would make any artist squirm; and for the removing of these I go to an expert.

My chief argument, however, is one that I must be allowed to bring forward before passing to another subject. It is mostly the drawings which have been in recent circulation that are thus signed. Even the smallest scrap from the artist's rough sketch book (as well as the worst effort of a forger) bears " Rowlandson " across its corner, yet not one of what I count my ten best drawings bears, or ever bore, a signature. How is this ? Would Rowlandson really sign some half-finished failure or rough work-sketch, yet forget to put his name upon *The End of the Mall*, *The Horse Fair*, *Landing at Greenwich*, or *Box Lobby Loungers ?* Even *The Boodle's Club Fête to George the Third*, a drawing of vast size for Rowlandson and containing innumerable figures—which Mr. Oppé mentions in his book as " a fine drawing " and " a sustained effort on a large scale "—is not signed. How can one account for this ? Most easily, I answer. These drawings have not been in the open lately. *Box Lobby Loungers* (Plate 29) came to me direct from the Carnarvon and Warwick collections, *Boodle's Fête* (Plate 18) from Sir John Crampton's sale at Christie's, *The End of the Mall* (Plate 21) from Mr. Sidney L. Phipson's admirable collection when, after kindly letting me save my chosen four or five, he sent his Rowlandsons across the Atlantic. *The Horse Fair at Southampton* was an early purchase from a first-class dealer. And so with all of them.

If any one still doubts, I fire my last shattering shot. There is, among my serious drawings, only one that I would absolutely swear to be signed by Rowlandson's own hands. This is a work that one would indeed

"DISEMBARKATION OF THE ROYALISTS

of Toulon at Southampton, sent to England by Lord Hood on the evacuation of that place in the year 1794": thus inscribed by Rowlandson, and signed. Water-colour, 14 in. × 9

PLATE 27

[*Facing p.* 126

expect him thus to honour. Mr. A. P. Oppé reproduces it as a coloured plate in his book, and writes of it, on page 14: "When Rowlandson joins these qualities, not to the curiosities of native or foreign architecture, but to the broken yet restful lines of shipping and water in a river-side or harbour scene, he is at his happiest. In *The Landing of the French Refugées from Toulon at Southampton*, 1794, the quietness and pathos of the scene, whether he saw it or imagined it, inspired him to an unusual effort of composition, lighting and colour. His minute crowds are always alive and expressive. Here the patience and silence of the refugees, as they are landed on the shores of exile in the stillness and among the casual movements of a harbour in calm are admirably blended with the glory of a sunny day."

This "unusual effort" the artist naturally signed—and how? His name sprawled inartistically on the yellow sand? No! "ROWLANDSON, 1794" painted in almost pure vermilion on the stern of a boat, as if it might be its name, forming part of the picture! Rowlandson, I argue, was too good an artist to make the amateur's mistake of spoiling his composition by a line of ink; and it must be remembered that this was more important in his case because he mainly drew small pictures. Their actual size is often surprising and it is so here. This spacious harbour-scene, crowded with boats, refugees and shipping, is only 13½ inches long by 8 inches tall. What room in it for an inch-long scrawled "Rowlandson"? He found, for once, a chance to sign artistically, and he took it. He may have put his name across caricatures, just

as he scribbled jokes upon them, but I am not concerned with these.

(May I be forgiven here a shameful excursus hidden between brackets? Those who see the coloured reproduction of this drawing in Mr. Oppé's *Thomas Rowlandson: His Drawings and Water-colours* will observe, in the foreground, two women apparently washing clothes in the French or Oriental fashion on a large white rock, that totally conceals their legs, whilst a typical Rowlandson dog, admirably placed as usual, looks on with a dangerous-seeming interest. When the drawing returned to me from the block-makers, I noticed something odd about this rock. I touched its surface. The whole rock fell away. It was tissue paper, fixed in some way that kept it flat, yet had not harmed the drawing. Behind it were revealed the bare legs of these women, who after all are merely paddling, oblivious of the tragedy about them, or maybe indulging in a cheap wash of their feet. Those who compare the drawing as reproduced in this book (Plate 27) and in Mr. Oppé's may think me very foolish to have been deluded by the supposed rock; but this blame must be shared by a former owner, by an astute dealer who sold it to me unframed, by Mr. Oppé, by the staff of *The Studio* and by the process engravers. Certainly it looks, like many other things, easy to detect after the event.

Clearly some earlier owner, possibly Victorian in both period and so-called morals, had thought propriety demanded the concealment of these naked legs, though one at least of the women has her skirt at a height that nowadays would be thought almost dowdy.

Such are the minor curiosities, the human interests, of collecting! And so ends my disgraceful but I hope not tedious digression.)

Signatures, then, are useless, and dates no better, as reassurance for puzzled Rowlandson collectors; and worse is yet to come if we believe his earlier critics. He himself is put into the box as something very like a faker, the first in a long line, of his own productions.

Now the risk of being an enthusiast is that, even when one has studied the work of a single painter for more than twenty years till some sort of instinct comes to the aid of knowledge, one may be suspected of a foolish partiality: of swinging the whitewash brush at the moment when one should be putting on the black cap. I therefore vow solemnly that I make no effort to acquit Rowlandson of having had, like Raphael and others, an " atelier " or school of ghosts who worked for him. That practice is not unknown with artists or popular fiction-writers of to-day, and Rowlandson may easily have followed it. On that point I keep an open mind, merely remarking that personally I rate the proportion of later forgeries far more highly than anybody else whom I have ever met; but the systematic fraud, which I now have to consider, seems oddly alien from everything we know of " Rolly's " casual nature, as depicted by his boon companions. Though these have testified to his vast output and related how he would, if broken by debt, hold up a reed-pen and say it was his hope in trouble, or whatever it might seem at that tipsy moment, yet not one of them has ever mentioned this highly systematised swindle, which should have delighted their satiric type of mind.

The legend seems to rest on two authorities and a pair of drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum. A writer, " W. P." in *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series. Vol. 4, July-December, 1869 (British Museum, No. 2115B), started it. He set out to comfort collectors who might be " at any time surprised at finding that five or six of Rowlandson's productions are almost exactly similar in outline and scarcely different in colour." He informed them that they " might rest assured that all are by him and were considered by him to be equally originals." This statement is so ludicrous in its gaily-curving sweep of ignorance that one would imagine no serious student of Rowlandson could consider it as more than one of those initialled *obiter dicta* by pompous nincompoops to which the best editors sometimes fall a prey : especially when he proceeds to details, thus :—

" The process of production was simple. . . . Rowlandson drew the outline of a subject (generally taking care to reverse the arms of his figures) and hand (*sic*) the paper to Mr. Ackermann to be treated as if it were a copperplate. This was taken to the press, where some well-damped paper was laid upon the sketch and the two were subjected to a pressure that turned them out as a right and left outline."

" The operation was repeated," this optimist goes on to tell us, with "other pieces of damp paper," (all from Rowlandson's drawn outline, please remember,) " until the original would not part with vermilion enough to indicate an outline : then that original became useless," (note this truly amazing statement) " and Rowlandson proceeded to reline the replicas

and to tint them according to the fancy of the moment."

Dear simple-minded, gossiping, old Grego naturally swallows this story, at sight, whole. None of its improbabilities sticks on his uvula at all. He enjoys adding to its dogmatic details, never quoting " W.P." as his authority but certainly qualifying his mouthful of scandal by a prefatory, " If the story we are told of his novel method . . . is serious."

" Rowlandson, it is related," he goes on, with the vague circumstantiality of the real blue-bellied gossip, " would saunter from his neighbouring lodgings in the Adelphi round to the Repository of Arts, and as the title of Mr. Ackermann's establishment was no misnomer," (can't you hear him lick his chops ? . . .) " every possible appliance was found therein ready to hand." In this way, reminiscent of the legendary penny-a-liner, he enlarges W.P.'s paragraph to fill close upon two of his vast pages. Perhaps unwisely he explains that Rowlandson had to take these alleged impressions " before the ink became fixed : " thus bringing to one's mind more fully the absurd rapidity with which the artist would have to *finish the outline of a whole drawing* and *then take the impressions.*

Rapid indeed was this draughtsman ! Could any yarn be more absurd ?

Grego was no critic : but it is more surprising to find the admirably judicial Mr. Oppé no less ready to accept W.P., with his cock-and-bull story, at face value. Indeed, on page 27 of *Thomas Rowlandson, His Drawings and Water-colours*, we find him referring to W.P. as " one of the very few well-informed writers

upon Rowlandson." "Yet," he says bluntly, after admitting improbabilities, "the story is true."

Neither of these writers seems to have asked who W.P. was; why he did not sign in full, like the two correspondents who answered and corrected him in the same volume of *Notes and Queries;* or whence he got his information. Neither of them appears to have observed that, in a second brief note later in this same volume (p. 490), W. P. himself throws light on his informant. "The friend," he writes, "to whom I am indebted for much information regarding the artist, who knew him personally, confirms the statement made by Mr. Bate that no representation, serious or caricature, exists of him."

That is the whole note, except the necessary heading "THOMAS ROWLANDSON," but it is quite enough. It pricks the bubble badly. This W.P. knew a man who knew Rowlandson! This man who knew Rowlandson, knew him "personally." He knew him so well, so personally, as to be unaware that Rowlandson had been admirably painted by John Raphael Smith, a famous artist and engraver, or that he left his own features unmistakably in many a drawing or caricature! He is corrected, this initialled know-all at second-hand, by a man from some Battersea back-street, who writes on page 541 to say that he has "several impressions of a portrait of Rowlandson, cleverly etched by T. H. Parker of London" and will send one to W. P. on getting his name and address. I somehow don't fancy that W.P. sent them. We all have come across, nowadays, the type of person who "knows somebody who knows" famous men.

DEER IN RICHMOND PARK,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (11 in. × 8), showing his enthusiasm for experiment in forms. The antler-motif is consistent

PLATE 28

[*Facing p.* 132

And this is the only begetter of the forgery-charge against Rowlandson, with his so cock-sure " was " or " would " : this, Mr. Oppé's " well-informed writer " on that artist !

Such is the birth in 1869 of this serious charge against an artist who was born in 1756 and died in 1827. This man who " knew " Rowlandson as worker must have been near dotage. Accusations, however, have more lives than cats, and so this has survived till now. It is even immortalised, in cold official print, upon the back of two drawings (E4162 — 1923), in a portfolio of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

This question of the so-called " off-set " print is an important, in fact a vital one for all Rowlandson collectors : but I must here consider the general reader and refer those interested to the Museum, if they wish to read the long printed note behind these two drawings. They come from different sources, one having been presented by Mr. Sidney Phipson and the other by Mr. Augustus Walker, two great enthusiasts for Rowlandson. Both represent the same object, a river scene : but they are exact opposites. A barge, that is, which points left in one, points right in the other. Clearly, no copyist would thus laboriously change round a picture, unless he were the same man who transposed the National Anthem backwards lately for a Leap Year supper. It is thus reasonable to suppose that one of these drawings, which is unspeakably worse than the other, either has been taken from it at birth by some mechanical process or else is a later forgery *based on an engraving*. Everyone seems ready to believe the worst of Rowlandson, and so the

second theory has been ignored and it has been assumed that the Victorian charges are correct. As a matter of fact, and working upon facts, I submit that this point of view is almost impossible to sustain by any argument at all. In the first place, these two drawings do not correspond at all exactly ; the eye proves that fact, measurements support it ; in the second place, the worse of the two, with its smudged cottage and skinny tree, nowhere reveals the hand of Rowlandson or any hand approaching it in skill ; and lastly (though I could add more points) there is nothing whatsoever that points to a date, for the worse drawing, earlier than Victorian times. It is a thin, pitiful, smudge that Rowlandson would never have fathered and no contemporary of his ever have accepted. If we are to swallow the full theory of " W.P. " and accept this as the original, " become useless," the thing is farcical indeed. I am going to indulge, like Grego, in guesswork. I mean to be a sleuth. I want to act as in the lately fashionable crook-play, where the murderer turns out to be either the detective or else the prosecuting K.C. for the Crown. I can call as evidence several dealers who knew that very pleasant gentleman, Mr. Grego, and still applaud the skill with which he copied, nay even improvised, Rowlandsons, that would deceive almost anyone. Grasping these two drawings, I mean to turn suddenly upon him as he stands there accusing Rowlandson, and I should much like, if only there had been some " s's " somewhere in it, to have hissed at him sibilantly, " Thou—thou art the man ! "

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not, except in my metaphoric drama, accuse Grego of any crime at all.

I think him to have been quite honest : he was a real enthusiast on caricature, a good friend to those who practised it before him. His book on Rowlandson is not a happy effort, but he wrote also upon Gillray and Cruikshank and gathered together the interesting mass of drawings and prints that illustrate the Kegan Paul editions of Angelo's *Reminiscences* and *Picnic*. I am sure that he copied Rowlandson and made the amazing improvisations from pure interest in his style and process. He was no more a faker or a forger than my mother, who in a busy career got recreation from copying delightfully, as gifts for friends, those oval needleworks of the eighteenth century and (again) even created others of her own upon their pattern. But where will be her needle-works in fifty years, and what date will be ascribed to them ? Where are Grego's Rowlandsoniana now ? I have seen many specimens, and so has every picture-dealer and every collector of experience. They are able, but lack the fluent line of an original at betraying moments, nor are the colours, notably the yellows, quite correct. He had not, after all, the actual paints that Rowlandson had used. However skilfully applied, they do not quite convince.

I suggest (to get back to my legal phrases) that this enthusiastic Grego, bitten with the idea of these mechanical replicas, attempted, here too, to follow Rowlandson. Is this more improbable than the other hypothesis ?

Listen to Grego himself. " This accounts for a certain portion of the duplicates after Rowlandson, which are of frequent occurrence." (How he must have laughed—he who dedicates his book " TO ALL

LOVERS OF HUMOUR "—as he wrote " a certain portion " !) " Often have purchasers felt their self-esteem lowered, when another possessor of the same design in a firmer outline has assured them that they have been deceived into buying a mere copy, oblivious that the guilty pair are both due to the hand of the master," (this he takes direct from *Notes and Queries*), " and that possibly other members of the same illicit family are lurking in the folios of rival amateurs." And he ends, triumphantly, this admirable copyist of his admired master, " A grand central gathering of works by Rowlandson, presuming a person of sufficient enterprise to prosecute the scheme of a comprehensive exhibition of the artist's works, would reveal some curiosities in the way of reproductive ability." Dramatic irony indeed !

Certainly I do not deny that Rowlandson often repeated a drawing that had pleased him ; no less often drew stronger versions of efforts that displeased him : but these were similar, in no way reversed. For the rest, I am not pig-headed in this matter. I shall believe, naturally, in his reversed duplicates when I am shown one: but, so far as this charge rests on " W.P." or on the two drawings at South Kensington, I have yet to be convinced. I see no Rowlandson, " no age " even (as the vulgar say) about the poorer of the pair. If it be not a fake taken from some engraving, I think that some Victorian copyist arrived at it mechanically by means of a transfer made with some greasy pigment, which he then reversed on to a sheet of paper. Is this less likely than that Rowlandson himself took impressions " before the ink became fixed," and in the process

rendered his original design " useless ? " The world has come to admit, by now, that he was an artist. . . .

Let us accept the difficulties of collecting Rowlandson, but need we add to them ? I hope that the authorities at the Victoria and Albert Museum will put, under Mr. Oppé's scholarly note upon these drawings, just one modest line, " Coke suggests a later experimental hand." Then visitors can judge, posterity decide. I should not like the slur of this fraud to rest on Rowlandson's name as an artist, till it is proved indisputably true.

A great difficulty, and one that can be proved much more convincingly, arises not from any streak of criminality in Rowlandson, but rather from his notorious good nature. His circle, we have seen, was one of satirists in prose, doggerel or water-colour. Around its circumference revolved, as always, the lesser lights, the gilded hangers-on. Among these we may not unjustly rank both John Nixon, that " facetious " city gentleman already mentioned, and Henry Wigstead, who sat as magistrate at Bow Street. Both these men aspired to be artists ; and Wigstead, it must be admitted, came near to his desire. Neither, however (to use an expressive vulgarism), was quite good enough, and the good-natured and maybe well-dined Rowlandson came to their aid. His etching, always more creative than exact, flattered especially these two. One has merely to look at Nixon's *Bartholomew Fair*, as it hangs, a rough inartistic daub, over the fireplace in the old Clapham house at the London Museum, and then at the engraving of it by Rowlandson " after " Nixon, to see that I am speaking truly. Or see what

poor stuff Nixon is, when J. Pettitt acts as his engraver !

But there is worse than that. Though I have nowhere seen it pointed out, there is definite proof that Rowlandson re-drew these crude efforts before etching them. The highly finished version, clearly by Rowlandson and exactly like the engraving, of this *Bartholomew Fair*, used to hang in the famous Gardner Collection and was sold at Sotheby's on March 24th, 1926. Other instances could be given ; but perhaps it will be less tiresome if, instead, I tell a short story that illustrates the difficulty and confusion which result and so help to make Rowlandson's drawings a specially fascinating study.

Just before Christmas, 1924, I received a most exciting letter. Perhaps others in the late forties may think " very exciting," applied to a letter, affectation : but they do not understand the ever-green simplicity, and thus the eternal youthfulness, of a collector's soul. Besides, I was—being a stone that rolls yet gathers too much moss—then a housemaster at Clayesmore, and in the routine of school life even little incidents seem big. " At last," wrote a dealer who is also a connoisseur, " I have the Rowlandson drawing which you certainly will not pass by ! " (This hints that I have grown particular ; it is true.) " It is none less than *The Box Lobby Loungers*, the print of which is, of course, famous. I bought it yesterday from Lord Carnarvon at Highclerc, and it also bears the stamp of Lord Warwick's collection. Of course I paid a very high price . . . "

Of *course* he had ! All my life I had waged war on

BOX LOBBY LOUNGERS,

by Thomas Rowlandson, in water-colour (22 in. × 15).

PLATE 29

[*Facing p.* 138

that absurd phrase, " of course," with which some people open every sentence, but now I saw that it really could sometimes mean something. I thought of the holidays just coming, of Christmas cheques, of income tax—and I at once asked him to bring the drawing down to Winchester. What collector worth the name has ever been deterred from buying by merely being bank-broke ? And next morning I had my reward. This enthusiastic dealer had shown the drawing to that other great enthusiast and expert, Mr. Oppé, who with a sound fellow-feeling had no doubt but that I should buy and wrote already to congratulate me on this treasure snatched from the maw of America. Imagine my remorse if I had already been virtuous and prudent !

" It is the finest Rowlandson drawing I have ever seen, of the full dress type," he wrote, " and all the better because not carried too far nor too highly coloured " ; and summed it up later, colloquially, as " the best of the swagger Rowlandsons that I have ever seen." Excitement, by now, was a mild word, and I can pay Rowlandson no higher compliment than to say that, when the dealer at last arrived that afternoon, the drawing, after so much praise in advance, did not disappoint me.

But now that truculent reader, whom I imagined at the beginning of this chapter, has finally flung down the book. " Well ! Of all the footling, pointless, egoistic stories ! The man's *naïveté* is shocking . . . " And so on. But wait ! The story really has a point, and one of interest to all collectors. For when I proudly looked up my new drawing in Grego, truly I

found a flattering page and a half devoted to it, with full-page reproduction and names of the real people who are shown in it. Truly, too, Grego described it as " one of Rowlandson's larger works " and " entitled to a prominent place in any collection of the artist's works." This was all splendid. I swelled visibly with importance. Very soon, no doubt, I should have been saying, " Yes, my boy," pompously to members of my house. But suddenly I saw " *Designed by H. Wigstead :* etched by Rowlandson ; published January 5th, 1786, by J. R. Smith, 83, Oxford Street."

" Designed by H. Wigstead " under the contemporary print ! Were the dealer, Mr. Oppé and myself all wrong ? By no means. Rowlandson and no one else put this drawing on paper ; but Wigstead had the glory (with fools) in his lifetime. Perhaps it was Rowlandson's good humour ; maybe Wigstead's well-lined magisterial purse ? It is too late now to tell.

But the confusion has not ended yet. Grego himself is all over the place about it in his chaotic volume. This drawing was " designed by Wigstead " (I. 180) ; Rowlandson drew and let Wigstead sign in the case of other drawings (I. 148 and 166) ; of *Opera House Gallery*, sent by Rowlandson to the Royal Academy in 1786, he hazards (I. 23) " under this designation, as we suspect, we recognise his *Box Lobby Loungers*, published the very same year." This last seems an interesting guess, and I should " love " (as women used to say before they became too male) to put " Exhibited by Rowlandson at the R.A. as *Opera House Gallery*, 1786," behind my drawing. Unluckily Mr. B. S. Long, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, has pointed

out (*The Connoisseur*, December, 1927) that Wigstead himself had a picture hung in the Royal Academy of 1785 and that it was called *The Back of the Boxes at the Theatre, Covent Garden*. This certainly fits my drawing better than *Opera House Gallery*, for the " world " shown is far more that of the boxes than of a gallery, including as it does Lord Coleraine and Sir Lumley Skeffington, so that probably the Wigstead-pinxit farce was played out to its comic ending. " It is not possible," adds Mr. Long, " that Wigstead should have been the author of so fine a drawing, which has the usual characteristics of the authentic Rowlandson manner," and expresses a hope that more light may be thrown on the work of Wigstead. If there be any value in the illumination offered by an amateur, I suggest that some day, maybe through this book, there will be brought to light a smudge by Wigstead (much like the Nixon *Bartholomew Fair*), which justified the " Wigstead designed " to the elastic and patron-fed conscience of the late eighteenth century. Perhaps, however, " smudge " is rather brutal ; for the drawings that I take to be Wigstead's own have a certain charm of quiet colour, browner in tone than Rowlandson's, and show talent in social caricature of kindly moderation, if no first-class talent.

It would be merely discouraging to write further of the difficulties in collecting Rowlandson : his own versions, some unfinished, of a single drawing ; the more frequent versions of devout Victorian young ladies ; the different titles that have clung to various versions ; thin drawings touched up by optimistic owners ; Rowlandson's pastiches of Old Masters or of living

painters (published as *Imitations*) ; drawings of seascapes by him, now signed " de Loutherbourg," figure studies ascribed to Gainsborough ; colour-patterns for plates (such as Ackermann urgently demands, in a letter inside my copy of the *Microcosm*, " as our colourers wait ") ; improvisations by enthusiasts ; the more than frequent fake. Nor does it come within the scope of this book, being on collecting and not about art, to discuss the qualities of Rowlandson as painter : much as I should like to linger on his use of dogs at the end of a group or the start of a procession to carry the eye forward (Plate 21), and his delicious experimental freshness in composition and design : two qualities that specially attract me to him. Look at a drawing, and if you are not delighted childishly by a well-placed dog you are almost sure to find Rowlandson indulging in his passion for using the curve of a bowl to please your eye (Plate 23), or else amusing it with some fantasy such as an arrangement in triangles of expanding sizes (Plate 7), or the antlers of stags mingled with bracken, that can scarcely be distinguished from them, and trees that writhe in not less contorted and pleasure-giving pattern (Plate 28). Rowlandson, indeed, may be said almost to have painted with his pen.

Luckily there is in any case no need for me to attempt this formal estimate of Rowlandson's quality and place in art. That has been done in admirable fashion by Mr. A. P. Oppé in a full introduction to the magnificent book already mentioned, *Thomas Rowlandson, His Drawings and Water-colours*, published by *The Studio* in 1923 at the price of two guineas (or limited

to 200 copies, five guineas). This is a book which every collector or admirer of Rowlandson would have to possess for its excellent plates, numbering close upon 100, sixteen being admirably reproduced in colour ; but Mr. Oppé has made its possession more necessary still by his scholarly analysis.

I do not find myself able to accept his new theory of Rowlandson's career, based on a denial of the legendary account that he " deserted serious art for light caricature." Mr. Oppé wants us to believe that Rowlandson's first Academy pictures were " drawings like his other exhibits." That they were drawings rather than oils may be the fact : one cannot say in most cases with any certainty at all ; but I see no reason to deny the story of his artistic lapse. Frankly, I confess I like it better as the more dramatic. Apart from this, the whole weight of evidence from the contemporary newspapers, as well as the known facts of this artist's life and early training, seem to support tradition at the expense of Mr. Oppé's ingenious theory.

This he bases on the fact that Rowlandson left nearly £3,000 in his will (thanks, I imagine, to the excellent Ackermann, who drew his later steps back to better work—if cash, indeed, be any test of artistic merit !), and on the entries in catalogues of the Royal Academy exhibitions. It would be too long, in a book of this sort, to state and dispute Mr. Oppé's argument ; but I must defend my own version of Rowlandson's career in a short paragraph.

" The portraits of 1781," writes Mr. Oppé, " were hung among the miniatures, while those of 1778 and 1779 are described as ' small full lengths.' " Certainly

this rules out any idea of their being huge canvases like Raeburn's ; probably it hints at their being in water-colour, not in oil ; but I fail to see that it holds any argument against their being *serious* drawings. " Small whole lengths " and " miniatures " are headings that both fit admirably such pleasant small portraits as that of a girl or the one showing George Morland before his fireplace, (by no means the finest version) in the British Museum (see p. 157). " S. R.," one of those who answered " W. P." in *Notes and Queries* close on sixty years ago, wrote : " I have seen a portrait by Rowlandson of George III. which possessed great art merit." I can see no objection to the idea that, when the Royal Academy put Rowlandson's early contributions among " miniatures " or " small full lengths," they were dealing with serious full-length portraits of small or miniature size.

One must not always reject the obvious !

When I have said this I have said everything adverse that even a lifelong crank on Rowlandson can find to say. This may seem remarkable to those who read, as all should, Mr. Oppé's skilful analysis and find it moderate when set against my enthusiastic transports.

This, however, need not be surprising. Not all cranks are fools, nor need enthusiasm prevent moderation. Though I myself get infinite enjoyment from Rowlandson's luxuriously flowing line, his gay yet gentle colour, his ingenuities of composition and design, I fully realise that other men get equal delight from artists who leave me absolutely cold. And Mr. Oppé is not cold. Had he been, he would not have promised to write this introduction or, having promised, given to

HAMPTON COURT PALACE,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (17½ in. × 11). One of his experiments in geometrical design

PLATE 30

[*Facing p.* 144

it a loving carefulness that most men would reserve for a big volume. His attitude is one of critical aloofness, stern analysis : but all the time there is under it a fond admiration as of a mother who vainly decides to look at her daughter exactly as she must appear to others. Moreover, I am firmly of opinion that in taking up this severe attitude of pure abstract criticism, he not only paid Rowlandson a deserved compliment, ranking him with the great masters and able to stand trial by their side, but also did his reputation a great service. Already, only five years later, I note more seriousness in the average critic's attitude to Rowlandson ; and, though in the long period when Rowlandson bore Grego's label " The Caricaturist," many of his finest compositions have crossed the Atlantic, it will be something if we can learn to appreciate and keep the rest. Undiluted praise, in 1923, might only have put up the back of Criticism, that neglected and therefore over-sensitive Cinderella of the Arts in England. Mr. Oppé, by his kindly sternness, induced defence rather than attack, and added such well-chosen plates that each man thereafter could form a judgment for himself. Rowlandson's fame has grown in proportion to Mr. Oppé's wisdom. Let us hope that my ecstasy can now be afforded !

Pictures, in any case, are meant to be seen, not read about ; and the first thing a collector must do, before he buys one Rowlandson, is to look long and well at many. If he add a magnifying glass to his equipment, he will soon become an expert, and all the difficulties about which I may have seemed gloomy will vanish into air, for Rowlandson, to use another phrase of the dealers, is " signed all over." To the eye trained by Time his

curves and flowing line are very different from the laborious one-eyed copy and betraying jerk of even the best faker. But do not fail to see that I say " trained by Time." If one knew instantly, there would be no fun : just as golf would not endure the furies and oaths of its devotees unless it justified itself by being difficult. After twenty years hard at it, I almost dare boast that, though I know nothing about other artists, I really can put my hand (metaphorically) on a special drawing and say : " This is the one that Rowlandson himself drew ; it was coloured by Rowlandson himself, unaided by pupils or assistants ; it has not been worked on since by any one at all." But Pride probably will take its toss ; and I shall have to admit that I am not likely to be able to do this till seventy, when I shall be too old to see and someone else will have to start.

And if any one, worn out by this long chapter of enthusiasm, forgets the dignity expected from the Lector and exclaims, " You silly ass, we want sensible advice : and how *can* a man look long and well at many Rowlandsons before he has bought one ? " I fling back at him the one grim word, " Museums."

CHAPTER XI

MUSEUMS

IT is rather appalling, when one looks on Life even from the forties, to notice how one seems able to sustain it only by a continual feast off early principles, tactfully put upon the menu card as "*Youthful Errors.*"

Is it possible that they were really errors? May it be a mere sentimental fallacy, no philosophic fact, that youth (as it seems fashionable to believe) is the time of ideals, and middle-age the time to hedge? This idea might be seen in later History to be a passing reaction from the heresy of our immediate ancestors, who smacked their fast-drying lips over the unctuous thought of "original sin" for children, infallible wisdom for all elders however imbecile by birth or habit. Probably the truth lies, as usual, somewhere in between. If so, the new fallacy is better than the old, seeing that it gives self-confidence to those suffering from Youth, that uncertain agony delicious in half-forgetful retrospect, but needing, while it is suffered, all the sympathy, yes even the reassuring respect, that Age can give to it. If Youth were not cocksure of its superior wisdom, the world could not progress.

Time was, and not long since, when I used, in what then certainly seemed youthful wisdom and clear-sightedness beyond that of my elders, to deplore the habit of Museums. "Beautiful things," I used to

declare in Oxford sitting-rooms, " get beauty out of their surroundings. The frieze of the Parthenon was lovely under a Greek sun: put into a vault as ' The Elgin Marbles ' it is mere depression. Everything in our Museums should be scattered broadcast, by an Act of Parliament, so that collectors could have the great joy of finding it again " ; and so on, all sounding sufficiently cogent for me to wonder why the Museums did not duly scatter and shut down.

Youth, Youth . . . ! Before I was forty-five, all my best painted silhouettes of the eighteenth century were to have been given gladly by me to the Victoria and Albert Museum, whilst I optimistically began to scheme how, presently, I might perhaps afford to give even my Rowlandsons, my one investment and chief joy, in this same way for the education and delight of others, the greater glory of their painter !

I think that my conversion may have dated from the first visit that I paid to the Soane Museum. This is certainly the most individual of all public treasure-houses ; and it is to be doubted whether, even in the future, it can be surpassed by anybody for this particular quality. At one time my day-dreams used to include the purchase of that old Regency house with green shutters which formed a sort of end to the Chain Pier at Brighton. This I was to fill with sentimental objects of its period :—not works of " fine " art, only things made and loved by amateurs of skill :—but the War came ; and now, I suppose, an improved Aquarium will wipe away this pleasantly thin house, laid flat against the cliff. Already, when I saw it last, half its atmosphere was lost in the foul petrol from half a

PIN-PRICKED PICTURE

in relief, touched with water-colour (11 in. × 7). Water-mark, 1794

PLATE 31 [*Facing p.* 148

hundred chars-à-bancs, that panted hungrily between it and the sea.

Sir John Soane was wiser as to both time and place. It was in 1812 that, as architect of the Bank of England, he himself planned and had built this eccentric stone bungalow next to his own house which stood, four-square to the sun, in Lincoln's Inn. When he died, after his wife, in 1837, he left it and its contents to the nation. Visiting the place to-day, one finds it exactly the same (but for electric light), as when Sir John last entered his home of strange delights. London of to-day is forgotten in the quiet rooms, the rambling passages banked up with broken statuary and classical remains, or the amazing basement that holds Seti's immense sarcophagus. Everywhere is something odd—small convex mirrors built into the arches, walls that swing open doubly, like great triptychs, to reveal yet more pictures—but always something that reveals the man, until, as the soft-voiced old attendants murmur, " Sir John was very proud of that . . ." you feel that it was only yesterday he died ; you know his spirit still lives with the objects that he proudly loved.

If you are in this Museum by yourself (and unless you take a companion almost certainly you will be), you must be very dull indeed of sensibility not to experience some new sensation of the soul, whether it be the same as mine or—more probably—another. Suddenly, however, through and behind these strange feelings, you are conscious ; I on my first visit there was conscious ; that beautiful and rare works of Art are adding to the sum of such emotions. Nowhere, I imagine, can a better idea be gained of Hogarth's

merits and faults as an artist than in this neglected little corner of old London. *The Rake's Progress* is there, in a gay room that comes like sunshine after the eerie shadows of crowded passages; and on other walls four yet larger oils, *The Election*, which always seem to me to show Hogarth as better, both in art and in satire, than the more famous series. And then all this gives way again to personal emotions, for one remembers that "Sir John was very proud of these;" that he went out one sunny or wet day and bought the *Rake's Progress* series, doubtless feeling very brave and rather nervous about telling Mrs. Soane. (I have read that he paid close upon £600 for the set of eight paintings. I wonder what each of them is worth to-day?) Thus it is, now, with a new valuation that the eyes travel round his possessions—that range from Turner, through Wedgwood plaques, to portraits of Napoleon by Goya and a lesser hand.

Yes, enemies of all Museums must start their cure, as I did, at number 13, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

It is not so very difficult, if you succumb there, to yield to the London Museum. Certainly the two places could scarcely be more different. This is a Palace that holds the London Museum, however much it may call itself "House." Its lofty, gilt-drooping roofs and ample staircases betray it. But much that is inside it shares the homeliness of that eccentric folly in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Its romantic approach, too, disarms any criticism on that score, and the view from a top window must assuredly complete conversion. Myself, I am left cold by the magnificent historical costumes, quaintly described (unless memory fails me) as lent

by Members of " the reigning dynasty," as if we were in old Egypt or modern Mexico ; and, after a long look at that delightful dinner-party where old costumes and towering wigs sit round a well-loaded table, needing only wax-faces for the meal's enjoyment, I drift at once towards the less important and far more interesting treasures. Never, surely,—not even in that strange little Museum, with its whiff of old mariners and gory days, in the High Street at Portsmouth—has such a quaint collection of delicious oddments come together under one roof. Here is a place that set out to glorify London, and has in a short period become one of London's glories. The gloomiest Museum-hater will, believe me, find some new enjoyment here, even if he has to descend to the bowels of the earth and see London burning in the Great Fire, with real smoke and flickering flame, or recoil in sudden alarm from the rats and wax-white prisoners that infest the authentic cells. Even a child could be happy there !

Not to be long, nor to make myself foolish by praising our great national collections in Bloomsbury, South Kensington and Trafalgar Square, I will end at yet another house, but very different from Sir John Soane's, the vast home of the Marquesses of Hertford. The story of this Wallace Collection, formed in Paris and brought to London for safety in the days of the commune, is so pertinent to all my theories of Collecting, that I cannot resist quoting two extracts from a Preface written by its Keeper, Mr. S. J. Camp, for an admirable guide, *Hours in the Wallace Collection*, published by Duckworth at the price of 3*s*. 6*d*.

" The Wallace Collection was brought together by

three generations of a great family, two of whom subordinated all other pleasure in life to its acquisition. Though to this end they spent their fortunes with a prodigality that amazed and disgusted their contemporaries, it remains for succeeding generations a monument to their taste, foresight, and discrimination. . . ."

" In Richard Seymour-Conway, the fourth Marquess (1800–70), æsthetic tastes outran all others. The son of a man whose extravagant entertainments rivalled those of the Prince Regent, he hated society, and cared nothing for what passed in the outer world. Although possessed of abilities that Peel thought might have carried him to the place of Prime Minister, the fourth marquess withdrew from politics after his succession in 1842, and, living as a recluse in Paris, proceeded to indulge the one great passion of his life. The mild enthusiasm of the father for the Dutch School gave place in the son to a passionate devotion to French art. He acquired at unheard-of prices the gems of the great collections that were dispersed between 1841 and his death in 1870. As a result Hertford House to-day contains not only superb examples of the Italian and Spanish schools and a series of English portraits of the first rank, but the finest collection in England of French eighteenth-century art. " I only like pleasing pictures," wrote the recluse in Paris to his London agent, and it is no surprise to find that the art which is so largely concerned with the easy pleasures of life should have held first place with him. The present volume deals only with pictures, but the whole art of the eighteenth century in France appealed to the marquess, and the

furniture he acquired can be compared in quality only with that in the Louvre."

Those disgusted contemporaries, those admiring generations that came after—what balm they are to the penniless and indeed overdrawn collector as he faces in guilty silence the reproachful gaze of wife, family or banker! I cannot, however, spare time gloatingly to rub the moral in, for, like the writer of that Preface, I am at the moment intent only upon pictures. Now, indeed, I am in for a confession. You have not done yet with my beloved Rowlandson. I want to tell you what you may find of his, to look at and perhaps to study, in our chief Museums; also, in passing, to substantiate what I said in my first words about him—that England has not been very clever about Rowlandson. Then we shall have finished with my monomania, and can pass on to my lesser manias.

There is a trade adjective that is repellent but most useful, by use of which a picture is ranked an "important," and only this vilely expressive word can convey what I feel to be lacking, so far as Rowlandson goes, in our national collections. There are many pleasant drawings, but nothing—important! Should we not, as a nation, possess most of the serious drawings, for instance, that have been so delightfully reproduced by Ackermann, and certainly all that were thought worthy to hang in the national Academy of Arts? Where are they now; where are they now? In private collections, and largely in America as well.

I believe, however, or rather, I hope until some other owner proves the contrary, that one of these Academy pictures may be in the London Museum. On the top

floor, at the stair-top and close beside—too close beside?—a window, hangs a large drawing called *Skating on the Serpentine* and dated 1786. Guesses, with Rowlandson, are dangerous indeed: but might not this be the *Serpentine River* that hung in the R.A. of 1784? (I hope that nobody will quote the later date against this theory, for I have dealt already with that matter.) At any rate, there hangs this "important" painting, for every one to see. It is, unluckily, burlesque and the landscape element is almost ignored: but it is full of wintry bleakness, lively movement and skilful arrangement. It is still amusing, and must have been more so to Rowlandson's contemporaries. The London Museum was wise to secure this in 1914. Under it hangs another, much smaller scene in Hyde Park, and a faked drawing of a lady riding in the Row, which politeness would forbid me to mention thus baldly if fakes were not so important a part of every collector's education. This, unhappily, is not a very enlightening specimen, for it is too bad to be true. The anatomy is erratic, the paint not Rowlandson's, nor yet the style even, nor the ink in which the whole attempt is signed.

The London Museum is fairly rich in Rowlandson's of less—well, "importance!" There are at least three Thames views, none in the first class; an entertaining little cock-fight and some trivial fragments in the old house from Clapham on the top floor; and, down in the basement, close beside the dim-lit cells that make even Tussaud's seem tame, you may find, surrounded by grisly relics of their time, two Rowlandson drawings of executions. The larger of these,

EXECUTION AT NEWGATE,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (11 in. × 7½) : showing his lively handling of a crowd

PLATE 32

[*Facing p.* 154

a triple death at Newgate and the vast assorted crowd that this attraction drew, is a slightly larger, and it seems to me, rougher version of one in my collection; but by Rowlandson himself, so far as a fittingly dim light allows such sweeping judgments. This drawing is well worth inspection, as it displays Rowlandson's amazing gift for suggesting in a small space the bustle of a crowd. Citizens of every class and age, shopkeepers, street vendors, sellers of " murder " or " last speech " broadsheets, the sheriff (is it ?) in his coach, lovers, boys, smart ladies, babies held up not to miss the sight of two men and one woman hanging in a single orgy of communal revenge; hundreds of tiny figures fit easily between the stage-like set of Newgate's walls and a tall house with balconies that overflow with people; and all (in my drawing) within a compass of 11 inches by $7\frac{1}{2}$.

I have mentioned the London Museum first, because it holds this one big drawing, framed and hung for everyone to see: but pictures are in this Museum only by accident (if I may so translate the logician's term)—by having London as their subject. The experienced collector, when he wishes to look at work by any artist, moves automatically towards the wonderful Print Room at the British Museum. He hangs up his coat and hat; sits down comfortably; fills in a few words on the Form before him; and lo! the treasures of the Past are his to turn over for so long as he may have the fancy.

Unluckily, when he tries this luxury with Rowlandson, he meets a disappointment. True, there are drawings, two big boxes full: but still there is nothing

important, and very little that could make a new-comer to Rowlandson think my praise of this artist deserved. Anyone who knows his work already will appreciate the beauty of a fairly slight landscape sketch, un-named but numbered 1863.1.10.248, in box 261. This shows the painter's best method in delightful manner. Of his free line and delicate colour it is more easy to get knowledge here—from the *Village Church* especially, although the figures are somewhat burlesqued—and of his skill in suggesting crowds from *Rowing for Coat and Badge*. In this drawing, Rowlandson makes a strange mistake, which also appears in a different view of the same occasion that is in my collection: he shows oars in exactly the wrong direction when an oarsman is at the end of the stroke. Perhaps, as in his odd convention of an almost oval cart-wheel, Rowlandson was anticipating Modernist contempt for Nature when in quest of Design?

Two large drawings may be seen by anyone who asks for them specially as from the "atlas" or "imperial" drawers respectively: but neither quite deserves its size. One is an unfinished *Richardson's Fair:* and I have found that Rowlandson showed very good judgment when he abandoned drawings mid-way. In this case, the grouping on the right had become distinctly cramped, and there was no less drastic cure. The other drawing is finished, a *Cattle Fair*; interesting and attractive in its composition, containing as it does a mass of animals and men, but badly damaged as to colour and weak in its central figure of a farmer's boy. This, however, the "imperial" drawing, is far better worth seeing than the other. Personally, I am

more interested in three slight drawings of *Valley of Stones* in box 261, for like a *Carn Brae* in my collection they point to Rowlandson's experimental mind, being mere studies of rock-formation, recalling again a modern artist and his recent specialisation in the fascinating shapes of slag-heaps. And those who find it hard to believe that Rowlandson at any time could paint serious portraits must not fail to see the little coloured drawing of a fashionable girl (1872.10.12.2386), of which no artist need have felt ashamed. It is a skilful, fragrant thing, worth all Rowlandson's alleged *Pretty Ladies* put together, and if I were offered my pick of the British Museum collection, the large drawings would be absolutely safe. Anyone in a hurry should ask first for box 260 and make sure of seeing this delicious trifle, full of character and Youth.

Only, seeing the dates of purchases " 1856," " 1863 " and so on, underneath these drawings, how bitterly one wishes that one could have had so early a pick of the market! How very different one's choice; how many dainty portraits and free landscapes of the rolling Downs there would have been in those two boxes!

Timid folk who prefer to see pictures framed, without the supposed ordeal of asking for portfolios, may always find a few hung in the Victoria and Albert Museum, notably in Room 84, devoted to the Dyce collection: but since those in authority have a laudable habit of varying their framed exhibits, it is scarcely safe for me to mention any special Rowlandson as on the wall. At present there is—long may it

remain—a sparkling rough sketch full of dash, representing the arrival at Portsmouth of French ships captured by Earl Howe. It is shown off splendidly by contrast with a later version of the same drawing, " signed " and madly mis-dated, framed under it and in the same mount : lifeless, laboured and inaccurate in both costume and fact. These are numbers 790 and 791 ; to be thus asked for at the Office of the Drawing Department, if not found in room 84. 794 is a pleasant *Knaresborough, Yorks*, pure landscape : and 798 shows the artist in his bolder method of treating village scenes as decoration. In other rooms may be seen *La Place de Meir, Antwerp*, a fair specimen of those great, crowded Market Places which seem to be admired but leave me rather cold by reason of their Prout-like calculation ; a big *Brook Green Fair*, lively at points and interesting in composition, but rather faded in its colour and failing in the treatment of big booths as a back-ground ; with many smaller landscapes that give a taste of Rowlandson's best quality, such as the delicate little view of a village street and ford *Near Helston, Cornwall*, hung in the Ashbee Bequest.

Those who see the portfolios, which they can do very comfortably at the table in the students' room, will find a medium-sized *Parish Vestry* that makes delicious use of blue and is distinctly Rowlandson at his best in many ways. Yet I find in this drawing, strongly, what I should call the Wigstead influence. Colour and humour have a more sombre air ; the paint seems a little different. As in a *Cupid and Bacchus* that I possess—pleasant young lovers flirting at a

spinet while Papa dozes sottishly with fellows like himself, apparently all parsons—it does seem here as if the qualities both of Wigstead and Rowlandson emerge. Perhaps such drawings were done at friendly lessons from the master to the magistrate ?

Country-dwellers, who find it hard to make time for Museums during a rare London Day, must never forget that not all the greatest treasures are to be found in the largest cities. Full many a gem—! This, notably is true of Oxford, many of whose treasures can make London gnash in envy. That may be scarcely true where Rowlandson is in question, but none the less there are in the Ashmolean some drawings of very special interest by this artist. Were they of lower quality than is the case, they would yet be worth inspection, for it seems probable that Francis Douce, who bequeathed about two dozen of them to the Museum at his death in 1834, may have bought from Rowlandson himself : and he has written dogmatically on no less than four that they are " copies by Miss Howitt." When I add that these four are all duly signed " by " Rowlandson, it will be seen that I do not exaggerate the attractive difficulty of studying that artist. The Ashmolean is particularly rich in drawings that have been etched : *The Old Bachelor in Distress*, one of the more pleasant caricatures ; *View of a Farmhouse at Hengar, Cornwall*, an average landscape ; *A Portrait-Painter's Ante Room;* and others, including that agreeable and dignified picture of School life which appears in *The Dance of Life* over a couplet of Combe's flat-footed doggerel:

> " The stern preceptor, with his threat'ning nod,
> Calls in the wise Correction of the Rod."

Finally, it is really pleasant to set on record, in hopes that other townships may follow, the example in local patriotism set by Kingston-on-Thames. The Museum and Art Gallery in that old-world spot possesses eight drawings by Rowlandson, six in colour : not rough caricatures bought hugger-mugger, but fine views of the neighbourhood : the Bridge and Town Hall of Kingston itself accounting for five of them, whilst the other three represent its neighbour Hampton Court. Here is, indeed, an example to be followed, however tardily, by others. I can imagine no better way in which the finest work by Rowlandson might be kept, from now on, in this country : no way in which he, true Englishman as he was and lover of its country-side, would have better liked his drawings to be housed than in the hamlets, now towns, which inspired them. And—who can tell ?—a wise fostering of this local spirit might not only encourage collectors in generosity to small Museums but end by clearing England from my charge (which stands after a visit to her big Museums) of not having been clever about Rowlandson.

MRS. SIDDONS, WITH KEMBLE

and family. A " small picture " (11 in. × 8) of the kind worth collecting

PLATE 33

[*Facing p.* 160

CHAPTER XII

FAKES

THE voice of the simple-minded is often heard, upraised in protest and despair, " These fakers really are becoming terrible," as though not only their dear " modern "-ity but rascality itself had been invented by this generation. These people really should read the old newspapers more, or the new ones less. The fakers always *were* terrible : so were all the other swindlers. Lately, in the *Morning Herald* for August 14th, 1795, I came across these two paragraphs, printed next each other, as they here appear :

MOCK AUCTIONS.—Thoſe perſons who are ſoon intimidated ſhould be very cautious how they viſit places of this deſcription, as the proprietors of theſe houſes have lately adopted a mode of ſwindling that falls little ſhort of actual robbery. When a " flat," or one whom the Auctioneer ſuppoſes can be eaſily " done," makes his appearance, the door is immediately cloſed (under pretence of keeping out the duſt, or of deadening the noiſe of coaches) a lot is ſet-a-going, and the ſtranger is declared to be the fortunate purchaſer. He remonſtrates, and refuſes to take it—the " Puffers " interfere, and all agree that he looked at the Gentleman in the deſk, which they inform him, is always taken for a bidding ; if they find he has not caſh enough about him to pay for the lot, they will frequently have the goodneſs to excuſe him, on his forfeiting five ſhillings or half-a-guinea.

Yeſterday a Baker in the City was convicted before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, at the Manſion Houſe, in the penalty of 5*l.* 19*s.* for ſelling bread ſhort of weight.

If these two hoary and eternal frauds were flourishing one hundred and thirty years ago, alongside the Confidence Trick and our dear friend the Spanish prisoner,

is it probable that forgers were not busy, long before, with the antique ?

Rowlandson, as a matter of fact, could publish, though he died in 1827, a caricature that needed no further inscription than *Modern Antiques ;* another of which *Italian Picture-Dealers humbugging Milord Anglais* was a title quite illuminating enough for anybody who had heard of the Old Masters. Some who knew but little of them must have heard, at least, of Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Jenkins was a Banker of the late eighteenth century. He also (as students of Nollekens will know) had a secret factory of Classical intaglios and cameos concealed in the ruins of the Colosseum at Rome. Tourists, then as now, were glad to have, and pleased to pay generously for, an " antique," especially if dug up almost under their own noses. In this connection I cannot resist quoting rather fully from the letter which Mr. Hamilton, a Dealer in the Antique, wrote from Rome to my Lord Wensumdale of Norwich, early in the year 1775 :

My Lord,

I am still in expectation of hearing your lordship's opinion of the plans of your Gallery, such as I have drawn them to suit the delicacy of your lordship's taste. Conisford House is known already for its paintings, being second only in Norfolk to your lordship's kinsman my lord Orford's at Houghton ; but to complete it as the expression of connoisseurship such as your lordship's, it is needed that such a Gallery of Sculptures shall be added as I have ventured to plan for your lordship. . . .

And for the windows, which, as your lordship will see, I have made high, to give the better light, the lower parts may be filled in with intaglios and cameos clear-set, such as my partner here, Mr. Thomas Jenkins, banker to all the English that come to this city, is for ever coming upon in the Campo Vaccino, which have a mighty

fine effect against the light without. You will ask me, my lord, what success I have met with in my efforts on your lordship's behalf. I have had hard work to persuade the Pope's Antiquary to permit of my sending your lordship, should you desire it, the fine piece representing Coriolanus and his mother Volumnia, a groupe I lately found at Tor Colombaro, half-way to Albano. Capital groupes such as this 'tis rare to come on, and I promise your lordship that my Lord Shelburne himself, for whose Gallery at his house in Berkeley Square, I have sent over thirty-five pieces in all, hath no such treasure as this. Likewise a fine statue of Antinous as Silvanus, which exceeds all that I have hitherto seen, and an Electra Mourning, which will make a rare pair with the Antinous, the Groupe being placed between them in the tall central niche, if you lordship, that is, should see good to agree with my plans.

For the Vases and Candelabri, Cav. Piranesi, a fine set of whose etchings after the Antique your lordship hath commissioned me to get, has some mighty fine pieces, for which he asks sixty or seventy Zechines, and I have this day heard that Mr. Jenkins hath come upon two Bustos in the finest manner, the one a Marcus Agrippa, the other a Vestal Claudia, which are but £40 the pair, and which, can I but content His Holiness's Antiquary Sig. Visconti, I should be well satisfied to see at Conisford House. . . .

Your lordship's friend, Mr. Coke of Holkham, hath this day paid me a visit, after some marbles for his Gallery. They call him in Rome "the handsome Englishman." . . . My men have this moment called me to see a mighty pretty piece which they have just found, a Minerva, in the highest Greek style, so beautiful a thing in truth that I cannot but think 'tis from the hand of Phidias himself, that very Lemnian Minerva, perhaps, of which Pliny writes in his 34th book. 'Tis a find so capital that I cannot but congratulate your lordship, the rather that it will need but little of the restorer's art. We have but to give her a spear and an owl, and a new crest to her helmet, and she is again perfect.

On two matters I would trouble your lordship to be more explicit. And first in the matter of money, seeing that the bill of exchange for £750 promised by your lordship is not yet to hand, and I have been forced to draw £500 from the bankers on your lordship's account. And hath your lordship any desire for an Egyptian Idol or two? But lately, I hear, Mr. Jenkins came upon a scarce broken idol in black granite, a vastly curious piece, the legs joined together and arms outstretched. Diodorus tells us, as your lordship will remember, that Daedalus the sculptor first made the legs apart, so that this piece would seem to be of a greater antiquity than Daedalus himself, although Homer makes mention of him in the Iliad: your lordship will doubtless recall the passage. (XVIII, 590, Ed. S.R.) . . .

If your lordship will favour me with your thoughts upon this subject, I shall do my best to carry out your lordship's wishes : and have this day bought off the Pope's Antiquary with my new busto of Pluto (a most rare piece) to permit the Minerva to go to your lordship in England. The Coriolanus I priced so high, that I am satisfied His Holiness will not be for giving the sum, £700 ; but your lordship shall have it £100 cheaper, that being my duty as your lordship's agent and most humble servant to command,

GAVIN HAMILTON.

It might seem amazing that some of this—notably the Pope's Antiquary and those words " for ever "—should have failed to rouse a client's suspicions, did not one know too well the gullibility of present-day collectors. The mania for " finds," which I have already condemned, leads to a kind of Hope that almost seeks to be deceived. Indeed its victim does actually deceive himself. " It wouldn't be worth their while to fake *this*," he exclaims hopefully at one pole : and at the other, " They couldn't possibly fake *that*." He forgets, in his fool's paradise, that even a hair-pin (XIX saec) would be worth faking if one sold enough : he forgets that the greater a thing's value, the more can be spent safely on its forging. He forgets the tiara of Saitaphernes, the Louvre bust, the Primitives, the Rodins. He forgets the sixpenny brass knockers. He forgets everything. He merely wants to have a " find." He scarcely ever fails.

Others of more balanced mind recall the past. They do not forget even Mr. Jenkins, that ingenious Banker. They wonder where his antiques, that he was " for ever coming upon " in the ruins of Rome, are at this moment ; what those " intaglios and cameos " look like at this moment ; whether they are catalogued as

forgeries by Jenkins or lie, as is more probable, in the chief place of some loved collection. The forgery of to-day or yesterday is fairly easy game. Soon the collector comes to know it, almost lovingly, by sight. Besides, only the best fakes—those such as the Burlington Fine Arts Club honoured by showing at a special exhibition in 1924—can afford the luxury of finished surface. There, in the bronze-like patina, is where an ill-considered forgery is bound to fail. Even those fine specimens at the Burlington Fine Arts Club—many made lovingly as mere experiments—did not really succeed in this matter ; but give them 100 years of life : what then ? The old forgery becomes a problem. The cracks in a picture ; the shrinking and slight rubbing of cut walnut ; all Time's tricks are carried out by Time himself, and the beginner might easily despair.

He need not. There is a wide difference in one essential point between the man who copies and the man who creates. That point is Art. Art is the exact opposite (whatever our present Academy may claim) of imitation. If a great artist took to forgery he would by his very nature be drawn to a strong deviation. He could not copy slavishly. His urge is to create. Let the despairing collector pay his 6*d*. on Students' Day at one of our Galleries and watch closely the difference between a Tintoretto by Tintoretto and a Tintoretto by an Art School student or a commerical faker. Unless eyesight fail, Hope will be born again.

Assuredly it is no part of my aim to tell, or even try to tell, beginners how they " should " collect : I hope that has been made quite clear. But to those timid

natures which are appalled, not heartened by the perils of a chase, I would say this: rely on observation, artistic pleasure, memory and a good pocket magnifying glass. Perhaps you are shy about producing this last from its little leather case. That is why you bought those Baxter prints. If you had braved (or, more probably, delighted) the dealer by looking at them magnified, you would have seen that they were printed by the three-colour process. A ragged overlap would have betrayed them. And if your memory had been a little better, you would have recalled (unless you are, as I hope, young) the time when these modern Baxters abounded along Wardour Street and helped to make the very name of that road so ill-odorous a synonym for "sham" that nearly all the dealers moved elsewhere.

It is pleasant to remember the fakes of twenty years ago and to meet them, rarely now, again. Their edges are, already, a little less hard and rough to the revealing finger. (Any collector who trusts to his eyes only is, as the Irish say, destroyed.) They have begun to tone down. They are gaining the dignity of an antique. Some of them, it is true, have not worn well. Those thin wax-pictures of Napoleon and Nelson, flat-coloured heads recalling inevitably the putty faces of our childhood, have cracked indeed, but not gracefully. The silhouettes that were waxed behind have taken the just-wrong colour, like a woman who has not enough light above her dressing-table. Those faded Morland prints have carried the process further on their own account, but not with increased power of delusion. Even the old writing behind those pitifully meagre

miniatures has aged in a distressing manner, for watered blue-black does not fade like the strong inks of our ancestors. Already, in so few years, it has gone too far.

Where the real skill of a connoisseur is called for, bringing him a fierce unrivalled joy, is when for the first time, silent as on a peak in Darien he sees a new, a really good, fake swim into his ken. This is among Life's moments : and unless the instinct that does, somehow, come from observation, is very clear indeed, the agony or ecstasy endures until our forger has had time to put more of his new product on the market. If you have resisted, what savage delight to see the shop windows filling ! If you have fallen—but you have not, if Art dwells in you and your eyesight, memory and hands are live. You paid early, you bought experience, as men must do in Bridge or any other game of skill. No longer do you snap at that " unique set " of *The Cries of London*, for you recall the triumph of Ackermann's successor, lately, when he finally, after long hunting, got into his Gallery the full thirteen, and how, within an hour (unless the papers once more lied), he sold them for £5,000 to an Englishman, though some of the thirteen had come from Austria and the United States. Oh dear, how simple—and how dull—collecting would be if one could really buy the whole set of London Cries from those little " olde " shops with the electric light that burns all day below rain-sodden sunblinds ! I watch with delight the new forgeries as they appear, and am amazed, in my own special subjects, that dealers of long experience and undoubted honesty can be so easily deceived. I should be thought

to exaggerate if I said how many have reported to me, with kind enthusiasm, flagrant specimens of the latest "antique" silhouette. This, oddly, is a forgery (so to speak) of something that never existed. It is a highly complicated silhouette—a Family or possibly some sporting scene—often in four separate panels—painted behind flat glass, with heavy criss-cross border usually added. Sometimes a shadow is cast in the Beetham manner: often a bit of colour is introduced, especially to liven the ladies who sit at tea below festoons of curtains. These are admirably done, but modern in every single line. Perhaps the artist (whom Rumour locates in the beautiful city of Bath) paints them for pleasure, ranks as a creator and finds himself exploited as a forger. Can a man be rightly called a faker, if he copies something that has never been? But I am getting tied up either in grammar or in metaphysics. I must leave the subject to a more philosophic pen, which might also tackle that interesting case of the man who carved innumerable old over-mantels, chests and cradles, in the antique manner, duly rubbed and worm-holed, but added to each the same date, oddly familiar to watchful collectors, "1603." How well one knows that twisted 3! What was in its carver's mind? Vanity perhaps—the force that makes a painter sign—or honesty, or even a sardonic humour.

After all, should we not be grateful to the forger? Without his aid, there could not be enough antiques for all. Consider, quite calmly, the amount of walnut furniture that can have existed in our small island during the reign of Queen Anne, when rich men were few: consider how much has been burnt, eaten by worms,

THE BRIBE,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (12 in. diameter). Might be dismissed as "caricature," but is a solid drawing of a subject that need not imply satire

PLATE 34 [*Facing p.* 168

or remains in its ancestral home ; consider the amount that our dealers still sell to the whole world each year ! What use to waste words on this ? It is better to set down more heartening reflections. Here, for instance, is a cutting from *Truth* of 1920, that I find among my papers :—

> The much-talked-of collection of portraits, etc., of Mary Queen of Scots, bequeathed by the Duke of Pomar to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, has been examined in Paris by experts, and it turns out that both the oil paintings and the miniatures are of recent date. The prints, supposed to be so precious, are nearly all either illustrations from books or periodicals or photographs. The Board of Trustees decided at once to refuse the bequest, excepting only a few of the prints. The news of these valuable additions to the national collection at Edinburgh had caused much delight in Scotland, now succeeded by disappointment and irritation.

Perhaps it is natural to feel sorry for the citizens of Edinburgh, but they are laudably philosophical, never even defending themselves from the English joke at their expense, though it began at Bannockburn and has not been given a week's rest by our comics since. One should, rather, reflect what great joy was added to the life of the Duc de Pomar. He could not, I feel sure, have afforded the real pictures, but he enjoyed buying all these photographs and plates ; he revelled in the fame of his collection. Is there not the same pleasure in store for any man who is content with fakes ? With the savants of Europe squabbling about Glozel, real things are beyond his judgment.

Fakes by contemporaries ; copies by eighteenth century Bankers or Victorian ladies ; old material adapted or restored ; carving or other ornament added to plain objects ; even improvisations such as the Bath silhouette—all these fill the cabinets or walls of a million

happy people, and let nobody complain : least of all the joyful fakers, busy already on manuscripts of Thomas Hardy and watching for their next occasion.

As to the collector, he welcomes this series of productions. They are the bunkers that lend a pleasurable excitement to the sport and only embarrass seriously a beginner.

CHAPTER XIII

U.S.A. AND US

FIFTY years ago, it would not have been believed that the time would come when an European book on antiques must of necessity deal with America. Twenty years ago, it was thought that America bought only Europe's fakes. Ten years hence, Europe may wake up and find that America has beaten her at yet one more game which started this side of the water.

Cheap-minded jesters, seeing that this chapter followed one on fakes, might ask me brightly what, exactly, had been the connection of idea ; but I am afraid that this joke, like most of those made by one nation at the expense of another, is beginning to show signs of age. The stage Frenchman of English provincial pantomime has altered, even since the War, almost as little as the stage Englishman of French revue. Why then should we be expected to keep our jokes about America quite up-to-date ? Let it remain the common notion that all tourists from America, even those who travel second class, are millionaires ; that they spend the " darlars," with which they overflow, on faked antiques ; that they return home full of faith that they have taken back an authentic piece of the old country ; and that the dealer wires Birmingham for two fresh bales as the *Berengaria* is sailing.

This is all right for our comics : it is just as good as

the American joke about ourselves—but it will not do at all for the collector. Who am I to try and explain a nation made up of twenty nationalities, none of which understands itself ? It can't be done. But let me give my views, briefly, on Americans, so far only as they are important to collectors.

America is young. That explains everything about her people, even their abnormal boasts. They are simple-minded. They have, however, the dignity of young manhood. They like enormously to be deceived, but prefer doing it themselves. When others try, they are not taken in for long. Barnum was right about the boobs being born each moment : but he never denied that some grow out of it. Americans work ; they learn quickly. They are, as a young nation, sentimentalists. The sobby centre-pictures that sometimes bedew the racy fun of their great comic paper, *Life*—" The Old Bathing Pool," " His Return to the Home Town," " The Last Crust," and so on—whisk us back to the days when our own Granny dropped tears over Frith and his companions. No American boy ever would submit to fagging, like an English lad, or to a Prefect's punitive authority. I'm telling you ; he wouldn't, sure : . . . but put the big boy into uniform ; sew three stripes on to his sleeve ; let someone blow a bugle ; and see that 100 per cent. small boy run !

Yes, it's as easy as all that. Anyhow, it seemed so. Therefore, at first, the American collector suffered. I do not speak here of the tourist. I don't want to. He—or more often she—is the bane of our smaller dealers. The American tourist finds especial attractions in a crowded antique shop—simplicity, indeed !—

KNIFE HANDLES

Adam and Eve, in horn; hippopotamus, in horn, piqué: minute 16th century carving, coloured, in ivory, of sacred subjects

PLATE 35 [*Facing p.* 172

it seems more genuine, this mass of junk, than the one with a few set-out things ; and so the small shop suffers, treated as a more costly form of free Museum, fitted with a free attendant who will answer questions. No, I am dealing with collectors only, and they do not behave like that. They, odd though it may seem, have mostly got their money by use of a brain. It was ingenuous to suppose that they were going to spend it without one.

Naturally they were taken in at first. Just as naturally they have learnt. Money is not, as another insular delusion has it, the be-all and soul of America. It represents success ; it is not an end in itself. They spend it as they made it—wisely. We were fools—judging a people by its politicians—to think otherwise

They have learnt. The best collectors are weeding out their early errors ; the finest antiques are going to America, and have been for ten years at least now. They do not buy Old Masters only ; they buy the sentimental, lovely, very English thing as well. Some objects they collect for reasons we can understand : books or prints concerning America before about 1710 ; old rigged ships in ivory or wood ; Rowlandson, who painted us as we were when they parted company from us for better or for worse. In other cases, such as wool-work ships of the late 'eighties, we can only forgive and try to understand. Perhaps that, too, is the tourists. Would we wish to be judged by what our trippers bring back from Boulogne ?

For the rest (and this is the point that all British collectors must get firmly, somehow, in their heads before it is too late), not merely because they have

more money since the War, but because they show more keenness, will to study, and even (I admit) good taste, the Americans are quickly stripping us of all the best that Time had brought down for our solace in an ugly age.

Time was, I confess it, when I used to grudge the Americans their loot. No cousinly thoughts, at that time, for me! I have been known, I admit, when talking to dealers who boasted of sending vast packing-cases full of antiques across the Atlantic, to say brutally: "Mind you send them lots of fakes; they don't care *what* they get, so long as you charge plenty for it." But I have recanted. America deserves all the treasures she can snatch from us, and we deserve to lose them.

Be not deceived. It is of no use (I risk repetition) to blame Finance; to say tearfully that we fought whilst America, too proud for that, collected cash; to growl that we forgive our Allies their debts, but that America is out for heavy interest on ours.

All this may or may not be true: most Englishmen and many Americans believe it is: but no such statements can change the central fact. The average Englishman's ignorance of Art is utterly abysmal; and he feels proud of it. "I know what I like," you hear him say. That phrase has passed into the language as archetype of the suburban bromide, but it is also heard in houses very near to Piccadilly. "I know what I like, and that's all that matters," people say comfortably, not thinking that to know less would surely connote imbecility of mind. No such negative criterion is used by the average American. (I talk, naturally, of the cities.) He doesn't know—not yet—but he

knows that he doesn't. And he's trying to learn. If so, he deserves the best specimens of English Art that we are fools enough to lose. I, for one, have ceased almost to lament their going.

The whole world must know by now that America, through its rich men, is building treasure houses in all the biggest cities, with the Metropolitan Museum in New York as their splendid centre and exemplar ; but what seems less fully realised is the fact that these places are used by the Americans themselves. They are not, like the London museums and public picture galleries, mere haunts for tourists from other countries ; not shelter and free-seating for the tragic down and out ; not the lover's peaceful trysting place : they are extension classes moulded into stone and marble. Nor are such actual classes frequented, as in London, by a few enthusiasts. The country, America itself, is out for Education. You see, it is young. . . .

It has often been asked how many Londoners even know what the National Gallery contains, how many, who travel to Madrid, Florence, Paris, to see Old Masters, understand that their own City contains a rich store of which, even in comparison with such wonderful places, it need not feel ashamed ; and that this is a free show—just for the trouble of climbing a few steps—on most days of the week. The answer would astound many readers, if fully and frankly given, but there is no cause for surprise. I have heard very great authorities on Art go further than I have gone above and say that no city can rival London in Art treasures, so far as Museums and Galleries are concerned. Yet how many of its inhabitants can lay their hands on a Bible and

swear that they have even entered all of the following, once only in their lifetime ?

The National Gallery (Trafalgar Square).
The National Gallery, Millbank (Tate Gallery).
The Wallace Collection (Hertford House).
The British Museum.
The Victoria and Albert Museum (South Kensington).
The London Museum.
The Soane Museum.
The National Portrait Gallery.

I shall be surprised if even half the readers of this book—*ex hypothesi* the intelligentsia of Art !—can take that oath. Recently I mentioned to three artistic Londoners those seven vast Raphael cartoons, snatched from Italy by Charles I., and now, through the kindness of His Majesty, among the chief treasures of the Victoria and Albert. Not one of them even knew that these great masterpieces were in England. The frieze from the Parthenon—but enough reproach !

America is a young nation with young ways. She has not yet learnt to be bored with possessions. She can, even, still admit ignorance. She will not only sit out a lecture, she will pay big prices for the seats to sit on. She is young, anxious to know, ridiculous perhaps at times in her conceit and self-consciousness, but splendidly receptive and alert. She will get all our Past, soon, and make it her Future. And she will value it far more than we do at present.

Here's good luck, then, to her, and good hunting !

For my part I willingly forgive the good citizen of Philadelphia who bought, I remember, in a single sale at Sotheby's some years ago, no less than 150 drawings by Rowlandson, comprising the whole set of designs

for both *The English Dance of Death* and *The Tour to Spithead to View the Wreck of the Royal George*, 1782. I will even cease to grudge America *The Faro-Table at Devonshire House*. If I can be thus noble about my own hobby, other collectors must hasten to follow my example. It is, I suggest, only prudent. That is an old story, about the custodian at the Louvre, who, hearing the pictures condemned, said : " It is not the pictures, but *you*, that are on trial." It may come true about America and us.

At present everything is very pleasant from our point of view. We have most of the old things and a good start in knowledge. Young America still sits at our antique feet, to learn. Quite bad novelists still return from lecture-tours around America with money. Perhaps they bring less money, but they still bring some. England is the master, America the pupil still.

It would be quite an error to suppose that, as yet, drawings by Rowlandson—to take the instance as to which I can testify—hang in opulent rows on the walls of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. There is a well-chosen, but not rich, show. The Curators wisely obtained some good drawings, though not the very best, from Mr. Phipson's excellent Collection when it crossed the Atlantic. They have, from it, *The Reception;* a very delightful *Downlands*, *Sussex*, pure landscape without figures ; and the drawing labelled by them *Derby Day*, but called, when it belonged to Mr. Phipson, *Fairlop Fair*, *Essex*, and occurring in my collection as *The Road to Epsom Races*. There are also, from other sources, the excellent drawing of *The Review*, which is illustrated in Mr. Oppé's book, and

three others of no special interest. That is all: but it is not bad for a young country, and we must remember that there are many rich men in America, who are likely, in the end, to let their pictures drift towards the Metropolitan Museum rather than be dispersed at auction. In the world of Collecting, America is almost a newcomer. That may possibly explain her keenness.

I have suggested, possibly *ad nauseam* (but it is an important fact), that America is quite willing to learn. Further, her individual inhabitants, even the humblest, seem to possess the instinct to collect, to codify, and to enlarge, or—at the worst—to enjoy the work of some one who has done it for them. The Ford car jokes amply illustrate my point. Give an American a car like the Ford, a face like Lon Chaney's, an anecdote like that about George Washington and his wee hatchet, even a word sequence like " It seems there were two Irishmen " or " That wasn't my wife : that was a lady," and he will doggedly twist it about in millions of permutations ; add, enrich, embroider, tirelessly for a full year, till he has made from it, not a mere legend of speech, but a full written epic. His best papers publish at least one hatchet-joke a week, whilst all across the vast continent freshmen and sophomores are waggling their ears till they have found, incredibly, yet one more combination of some agèd catchword, with just the same ceaseless energy that makes them carry athletic championships home to their country. It has been said that you may judge a nation by its songs. Do not its jokes lift the veil a little higher ?

Britons do not possess this grim, almost terrifying,

PICTURE IN STRAW AND SILK

One of a pair, Dutch, late 17th century (12 in. × 9), the dresses of silk, the background painted on a panel

PLATE 36

[*Facing p.* 178

concentration on what an old nation regards as rather unimportant. We taught them games : they learnt to play them better than ourselves. Have I not hinted that collecting, too, may be a kind of Sport ? And, even if it be set down as a work-subject, are there no cases where pupils have outstripped their masters ? If we pull down our old buildings and scatter our antique possessions, does not the American risk having, soon, more antiques than we have and knowing more about them too ?

It will be a bad moment, that first one in which America finds England out.

CHAPTER XIV

FRESH LIGHT ON SILHOUETTES

SILHOUETTES were my first love: and if in the end I defy the proverb by not returning to them, it will only be because I never shall have left them. I must, from first to last, have bought half a thousand silhouettes. Let no one think that these now jostle each other, hideously, on my walls. Even if I were that kind of accumulative collector (and he seems to me always rather like the dog in the manger, giving no one else a chance to share his pleasure), my ideas on decoration would prevent the outrage. I never envy those wholesale collectors of whom dealers speak in bated tones: "I know a gentleman who has eight hundred toby-jugs." His house must be a nightmare: nor—to descend a little—will his eight hundred ever be worth so much as if he had the eighty best of them, for when Death releases them upon the market, they will by mere bulk bring about a glut and its inevitable slump.

I doubt if a hundred silhouettes now hang on my walls, even if I count the upright rows that break pleasantly those endless little spaces between doors which always occur in a Flat-passage. A vast crate full of them was burnt by Hudson's: I gave my best, as a collection, to the Victoria and Albert: I sold about a hundred in 1910, to buy some tempting Rowlandsons, and almost as many in 1927, to pay my income tax.

I state these last two facts proudly, for I know that, as a rule, I fail badly in the second duty of a good collector. He must buy, buy, buy : but he must also sell, and this last I myself do not find easy. Again and again, feeling that the crowded state of my walls is against my principles, I go round the Flat with an assumed sternness, seeking what I may sell : but so many memories and associations have come to hang round each proposed victim that, in the end, may fades into might, soon into someday, and the end is cannot. . . . Collectors, however, should follow my advice rather than my example. In defence of this last I must add that I am one of those who think before they buy. If I had poor specimens I would not hesitate, however happy the day on which I bought them, to let the lot slide into an early auction: for these are the death of a collection.

Fond as I am, however, of my silhouettes, I shall find it easier to be brief about this hobby than I was on Rowlandson, because, in *The Art of Silhouette*, I have already let myself go over ten chapters, and those interested can no doubt get a copy from some second-hand book-seller. All that I want now to do is to give what new facts I have added, in fifteen years, to an interleaved desk-copy of that volume, and to recount my long efforts, only half successful, to solve an outstanding mystery of Silhouette. Perhaps, before beginning, I may be allowed the vanity of boasting that, though in my Preface of 1912, I wrote : " There are mistakes, of course : and as to this I can only say that gratitude shall leaven the grief with which I receive corrections," and though many delightful

letters, gummed in, add to my knowledge of the profilists I mentioned, I do not find that I have had anywhere to take back one word—except through my own later discoveries—of what I wrote after fourteen years of silhouette-collecting. Naturally, however, there were bound to be omissions.

Probably the most serious was that pointed out by a writer in *Notes and Queries* for October 17, 1925 : and here, I admit, I am still baffled—though this is not the " mystery " that I have been concerned in solving.

Thomas Gray the poet had, it seems, a friend who sent him, in 1758, two poems for friendly criticism, and one of the two ran, in its revised form, as follows :

ODE

to Mr. Joliffe, who cuts out Likenesses from the Shadow at White's.

" Oh thou that on the walls of White's,
The temple of virtú,
Of dukes and earls, and lords and knights,
Portray'st the features true !

Hail, founder of the British school !
No aids from science gleaning ;
Let Reynolds blush, ideal fool,
Who gives his pictures meaning :

Of taste or manners let him dream,
With all his art and care,
He can but show us what men seem,
You show us what they are.

Let connoisseurs of colouring talk,
What is't at best but skin ;
You, Joliffe, at one master-stroke,
Display the void within . . ."

The poet, a Rev. William Mason, considers this Ode to be " as modern as can be wished,"—odd how that " modern " snobbery affects every generation in its

turn !—and also to be " that on which I trust all my future fame will be founded." The kindly Gray, swallowing that second line, replies, eight days later,

" I am extremely pleased with your fashionable Ode, and have nothing to find fault there, only you must say ' portray'st ' in the first stanza ; and ' it looks at best but skin ' in the fourth is not right."

But, interesting though all this may be in many ways to those who love human nature down the ages, our chief interest must be, for the moment, with an explanation that the Londoner Mason gives to his rustic friend Gray, whom he imagines to be asking, " Well, but who is Mr. Jolliffe, and how came you to be acquainted with him ? "

" Lord, you are not one of us ; you know nothing of life. Why, Mr. Joliffe is a bookseller's son in St. James Street, who takes profiles with a candle better than anybody. All White's have sat to him, not to mention Prince Edward. At first his price was only half a crown, but it is now raised to a crown, and he has literally got above a hundred pounds by it."

Dr. G. D. Lumb, the correspondent who sends this to *Notes and Queries*, adds :

" Joliffe is not mentioned by either Mrs. Nevill Jackson or by Mr. Desmond Coke in their books on Silhouettes, and it will be interesting to know whether any of his works has been identified, or if his fame rests entirely on Mr. Mason's Ode."

This seems to be a scandalous omission on the part of both my friend Mrs. Nevill Jackson and myself. She may have remedied it in one of the delightful articles, fruits of her tireless research, that she frequently prints in *The Connoisseur* to the joy of all collectors, though certainly I don't recall it. For my-

self, I must frankly confess to being just as ignorant as ever about the admirable Joliffe. If he was really as good as Mr. Mason thought, he possibly committed the error of having neither signature nor label. He would then be the cutter of some of those excellent early silhouettes, which nearly convert me to the scissors, firm advocate though I am of the paint-brush. These, as a rule, are put down, at sight, to Mrs. Harrington.

Certainly, Joliffe cannot have been a great believer in publicity. I have amused myself, since the War, by making a collection—from papers, I may add, already mutilated by an earlier vandal—of profilists' advertisements. These start well back in the eighteenth century: but nowhere have I yet found one put in by Joliffe. This is a pity, for these men threw, naturally, a strong light on their art and methods, when they sat down to write self-praise: and much is learnt now, that might not otherwise be known.

Mrs. Harrington, although established by 1782 at 131, New Bond Street, was still modest, merely adding a " most " to the set " Striking Likenesses " and stating, rather superbly, " No letters received unless post paid. Attends daily from eleven to three only."

Charles, however, although a Royal Academician, (or " Royal Academean," as he more nicely put it,) was not faint in self-praise and consequently in self-illumination. Read his advertisement in the daily Press of 1792 :

PAINTING STRONG LIKENESSES

In a Quarter of an Hour in Miniature, and finiſhed in one day, at CHARLES's, No. 130, oppoſite the Lyceum, Strand.

PROFILE OF MARY WILMOT,

" September 16th, 1781, aged 45," painted and signed " M. Lane Kelfe fecit, Bath, 1781," in wooden frame

PLATE 37 [*Facing p.* 184

A moſt perfect reſemblance of the Face taken in fifteen minutes in miniature, for Lockets, Rings, &c., in a maſterly manner for One, Two, Three, and Five Guineas, and only one ſitting, which is ſubmitted for public deciſion, whether this is not an exemplary ſignature of the extraordinary conſequences of the power of practice.

Mr. Charles has ſtudied the Italian, Flemiſh and all the great ſchools, and is a Royal Academean. His Profile Shades for taſte of finiſhing by artiſts have been long allowed the ſuperiority, but the public testimony of 11,600 who have ſat to him, and whoſe names he can ſhow, is ſufficient praiſe, without here recapitulating the improvements he has made on them.

Time of ſitting only three minutes.

He takes them on Paper at 3/6*d*., elegantly framed 6/– on Glaſs and Ivory at 10/6*d*. If not approved at the time of ſitting, no pay. Whole lengths taken at One Guinea.

There is no neceſsity for perſons to come with their hair dreſsed.

I am pleased with my idea of getting together these advertisements, for they give us, from the painter's own hand, absolutely certain knowledge. We know, for instance, that Charles worked on paper, as well as glass or ivory ; we know that he employed " artists " ; we know that he did full lengths, though I have never seen one ; we know that, though he is now among the rarest profilists, he painted close upon 12,000 likenesses before 1792 ; we know what he charged ; we know how long he took ; we know he did not use the vile word " silhouette."

When I wrote my book, I gave a whole chapter to Labels and what we can learn from them : but I now see that the advertisements are not only longer but far more revealing. We get the method, often—and the man. The man " or the woman " I should write, for women were successful (oh, how " modern " !) in this new industry or minor art. That the pleasant artist M. Lane Kelfe was a woman, (also that I was wrong on page 124 of my book in guessing that " Lane Kelfe

probably was not a professional ") may be proved from her announcement of 1785 :

STRIKING LIKENESSES IN PROFILES

Taken to the greateſt Exactneſs in a few minutes by M. L. Kelſe (from Bond ſtreet, Bath,) who moſt reſpectfully acquaints the Nobility and Gentry that ſhe draws Profiles on a new and improved method, ſuperior to any for elegance and beauty, which have met with the approbation of the Nobility, who have honored her with ſitting. Specimens of 160 different Profiles on glaſs, ſatin, enamel, shaded and plain, may be ſeen at her apartments, No. 20, Duke Street, St. James's.

Large and ſmall ſhades accurately copied, and the Likeneſs, critically preſerved, reduced to any size.

Who, after reading that, can boast to know all, or even much, about silhouettes ? Where are all the specimens by this artist on satin and enamel ? What names are attributed to her accurate copies of the earlier Shades ?

Mrs. Beetham, too, the greatest of all female Profilists and to my mind outstripping her male rivals, manages to get, I feel, some of her greatness into this tempting announcement of 1792, that has in it a pleasant touch of femininity :

PROFILES.

MRS. BEETHAM, who has ever been diſtinguiſhed as one of the moſt eminent who ever attempted PROFILE LIKENESSES, continues to execute them with that Taſte and Elegance which remains unrivalled. She paints them on Chryſtals, ornamented with gold and ſilver, diſplaying the hair and drapery in a manner more beautiful than can be conceived till ſeen ; and if not the moſt ſtriking likeness, no gratuity will be expected. She likewise finiſhes them on IVORY, COMPOSITION, and PAPER, for RINGS, LOCKETS, BRACELETS, &c.

Time of Sitting, One Minute.

Specimens to be seen at her houſe, No. 27, Fleet-ſtreet.

Here, certainly, we learn something, if only that what we call " silhouettes on plaster " really were

PROFILE OF A MAN

painted on convex glass by Mrs. Beetham, 1785, with label at back. Her boasted shadow is seen on the composition background

PLATE 38 [*Facing p.* 186

Profiles on composition. " Taste and elegance " sum up her dainty methods, while " the hair and drapery " are shrewd guesses at what puts her work above that of her rivals and makes the " time of sitting, one minute " something that nobody could ever hazard. Certainly we miss, in this colder announcement, that lyrical passage in which young Mrs. Beetham, still sentimental though in business, celebrated on her earlier Label the new invention of shadows cast from the glass (or " chrystal ") on to the plaster (or " composition ") behind :

" . . . has enabled herself to remedy a *Difficulty* much lamented and universally experienced by

PARENTS, LOVERS, AND FRIENDS.

The former, aſsisted by her Art, may see their offspring in any part of the terraqueous Globe ;
nor can Death obliterate the Features from
their fond Remembrance.

LOVERS, the Poets have advanced, " Can waft a ſigh from Indus to the Pole."

She will gratify them with more substantial, though ideal, intercourse
By placing the beloved Object to their view."

Such romantic descriptions of Shadows would be out of place, set in a column next to some sordid Law-case, but I submit that these advertisements possess a real, if different, value.

How admirable it would be if our Royal Academeans of to-day would explain, on the front page of *The Times*, what they are trying to do in their depressing Exhibitions ! Those old-established artists who, from their palaces, issue periodic denunciations of younger rivals would be specially well served by a revival of this method.

Mr. —— X——, the Royal Academean, continues to paint Sun-Set Scenes, Herbaceous Borders, photographic Portraits, problem pictures, and just-not-nude Venuses, as painted by all Royal Academeans of reputation in Victorian times. He appeals to the fair Minds of his Co-Evals, whether this be not the inevitable Fruits of an Imitative Instinct combined with the Reading, during early Boy-hood, of the late S. Smiles. He defies the World to prove that he has ever omitted a single Line, Tint or Wrinkle, that can be seen in Nature, and consequently his Figures are as life-like as Reality, excepting only that they are not Alive.

Mr. —— X—— continues to denounce those starving younger Painters, who prostitute their Art by importing into it Design, Composition, Movement, intellectual Ideas and other innovations which, since the word " Pro-Boer " unluckily ceased to cause Prejudice, he shall continue to stigmatise as " Bolshevistic."

Prices as in the R.A. catalogue, or by arrangement.

I submit that this would add immensely to our knowledge: and so it was with those simpler exponents of a minor art who put their advertisements into the papers of the eighteenth century. We learn, for instance, that they did not know themselves as " silhouettists." That word was, I guess, by its very accident of origin, an insult in those early days. Had I found these advertisements in time, I should have been more polite and called my book *The Art of Profile*, even at the risk of a seeming affectation. Perhaps, now, it is too late to do anything at all. Mrs. Nevill Jackson has written two books that have the word silhouette somewhere in their title: *The History of Silhouette* and *Ancestors in Silhouette*. I fear that by now, the word will stick with collectors. I give up the idea of a campaign. Only, let us at least remember that these men and women were profilists in their own day; that they painted Profiles, Shades, Strong Likenesses, Profile Likenesses, or (like Mrs. Harrington in 1782) mere Likenesses, and never " silhouettes," however much

we may use nowadays that derogatory word. George Rouse, so early as 1755, advertised his willingness to draw " Gentlemen and Ladies' PICTURES in Indian Ink, in a ſmall Oval, at Half a Guinea each, with Frame and Glaſs at the Bridge Ward Coffee-House, under the Piazza on London Bridge," whilst Master Hubard, as late as 1823, still clung to " most strikingly-correct and spirited LIKENESSES " ; and Field in 1840 to " PROFILE LIKENESSES," as heading : then " These PROFILES, so extensively patronised for their superiority of likeness and finishing in bronze etc., have been solely executed for the last forty years to the present period for the late Mr. Miers and Son by Mr. Field, No. 2, Strand." And Miers (who might or might not have accepted the above claim), certainly the greatest profilist after Mrs. Beetham, if indeed inferior at all to her, thus heralded his arrival in London during 1788 (the advertisement is dated 1789, but he arrived in December, 1788 :)

MOST STRIKING LIKENESSES.

PROFILE SHADES IN MINIATURE, executed on an original plan, eſſentially different and allowed by the firſt Artiſts to be infinitely ſuperior to all others ; the invention of J. MIERS, late of LEEDS.

MR. MIERS, encouraged by his uniform success and the flattering encomiums which have attended his works in Edinburgh, and in different parts of England, he now reſpectfully ſubmits his performances to the candid inſpection of the diſcerning Public in London, truſting his reputation to their deciſion—but, neverthelefs, confidently hoping to experience that encouragement which is ever ſhewn by them to works of novelty and merit.

He begs leave to obſerve one circumſtance (peculiar only to his invention) as an unqueſtionable teſtimony of the perfect and unerring principles of his method, viz. : That in proportion as the Shades are reduced, they invariably acquire increaſing spirit and animation, a circumſtance directly oppoſite to any previous invention.—These miniatures are particularly adapted for wearing in

rings, pins, lockets, bracelets, Etc.—Specimens may be seen at his Apartments, Mr. Middleton's Pencil Manufactory, No. 162, opposite the New Church, Strand, where he attends from Twelve in the morning till Four in the afternoon, every day.

Time of fitting—two Minutes.

Each Likeness will be given in an elegant Frame, or reduced upon Ivory, to set in Rings, Lockets, &c., &c.

The expence from 7/6*d.* to One Guinea, according to the finishing of the Miniatures and Frames.

I think collectors will gratefully admit that there is much to be learnt from this full advertisement that does not appear in the meagre Label. That there were grades of frame, for instance, disposes of a theory by which dates of silhouettes by Miers could be judged according to whether they had the plain brass rim, the embossed ormolu, or the fine Beetham-like painted glass around their papier maché or their pearwood. Miers, it must be also noticed, though boasting of his miniatures for use in pins or rings, does not use the adjective " secret " employed by his partner Field in a later announcement. None the less, even early seals that have a rather bulging air should be firmly handled by collectors. Here is the chance for an authentic " find " ! The heavy gilt-work just above the stone yields to a strong pull, revealing a tiny portrait signed miraculously underneath its bust. The last one I thus found, in a jeweller's of the South Coast, may be seen at the Victoria and Albert (Room 100). I wonder how many families possess these " secret " rings or lockets, with no idea that they conceal the portrait of an ancestor ?

But I am wandering away from my present point, which is that Miers, in the length of this advertisement, uses many variations, like a true craftsman—" Striking

PROFILE OF A LADY

painted on composition by Miers, with the rare Leeds label, which proves it to have been painted before December, 1788

PLATE 39 [*Facing p.* 190

Likenesses," " Profile Shades," " works," " Shades," " Miniatures," and " Likeness " : a performance worthy of the later Mr. Roget—but does not descend to the French vulgarism, " Silhouette."

Nearest to it, indeed, of all my advertisements, comes that drawn out by Torond, of 18, Wells Street, in 1784. He heads it " LES PORTRAITS en PASSANT." It must, however, be remembered that Torond was himself a Frenchman.

Just before the War, a grandson of Torond, a decorator, wrote to me and later paid me an interesting visit. He said that his grandfather died in his sixty-ninth year on June 12th, 1812 ; that he painted religious pictures and coloured miniatures as well as silhouettes ; and that, being of Huguenot descent, he took Torond as a trade-name. In 1784 he made a profile of Lunardi, the ballooning pioneer. Torond (I knew, without being told) painted exquisite groups in silhouette more successfully than anyone who tried this difficult achievement. Mrs. Alec Tweedie has a beautiful specimen—guests grouped at a tea-table, a favourite device of Torond—and I had many burnt, including the " spinet-player " that I showed in my book, and also a military portrait interesting by reason of its method. This full-length silhouette showed a young Officer with his body turned, so to speak, full-face, but his head in profile : the face black, the body shaded restfully in browns. The result was surprisingly successful. I much regret that so many fine Toronds, got from his grandson should have been destroyed in a single fire. Those who possess a full-length made under this uncommon formula may appease the Huguenot's spirit

by adding " Torond " to it safely. He did not always sign, or always add a label.

A mass of advertisements, some corrected for the Press by Torond, was given me by his grandson and survived the fire by being left at Horsham. From these one may learn a little more about this fine, yet little known, silhouettist. Before coming to London, he worked at Bath, like many of his rivals, and there took a profile of the Duke of Northumberland and " likewise a full-length of JOHN STANLEY, Eſq., Maſter of His Majesty's Band of Muſicians," of which he sold copies to all comers " at Half-a-Crown and Five Shillings the likeness "—so that these should be not uncommon. Torond also was of the profilists who claimed to copy the shades taken by others. He even offered to " group " these " in the genteeleſt taſte." It can be realised what difficulty this habit creates for collectors. Torond would also reduce them " to any size, for furniture, bracelets, lockets, or rings." I like Torond. In spite of his skill, he was humble. He boasted little, and though one of his advertisements ends, superbly, " N.B. The above are not common ſhades," he cuts this warning out—in an ink faded to the brown of Rowlandson's—before he passes it for a later insertion.

Wellings, whom I should place easily second as a painter of groups in silhouette, ends an advertisement of 1792 (in which he boasts of fourteen years at one London address) with these interesting words :

Miniatures for Lockets, Bracelets, Rings, and Fauſe Montres, painted in the moſt elegant manner.

Whole lengths, Coloured or Black Shaded and Plain Coloured or Black Buſts, Conversations, &c.

N.B. Ladies and Gentlemen wiſhing to obtain Portraits of the

Performers of either of the Theatres Royal, may have them in any Character required on a few days notice."

The exact significance of "Faufe Montres" eludes my mind, probably too insular or not sufficiently refined: but this reference to "Conversations" is clearly understood. A specimen may be seen in the Victoria and Albert (Room 100), and it is good to have the proper name. Two ladies are seen gossiping over their tea-cups, and the room is so pleasantly suggested that a lantern slide of this silhouette was thrown upon the screen during a recent lecture by one of the Museum staff on "Furniture in Art." It would be good to possess those exquisite chairs on which the ladies sit: but people with limited incomes should set themselves a more modest aim and seek, before they are too late for this also, to find one of Wellings' or Torond's agreeable "Conversations." (See this book's end-papers.)

I am tempted to linger, as may be seen, on these advertisements that so vividly reveal the men and women who put them on paper: but I must end, and it shall be with anti-climax. By 1823 we find young Hubard—"that singularly gifted little boy," as his Label describes him—arriving at Liverpool with this rather dingy boast:—

JUST ARRIVED AT STOAKE'S ROOMS, CHURCH STREET, MASTER HUBARD,

WITHOUT the aid of drawing or Machine, but merely by a slight glance at the face, produces, in less than 20 seconds, the most strikingly-correct and spirited likenesses with *a pair of common scissors*. His exhibition of fancy Cuttings consists of Flowers, Trees, Landscapes, Animals, Likenesses of distinguished individuals, Family Groups, Sporting Pieces, Caricatures, &c. *Admission, One Shilling*, which entitles the visitor to one likeness in bust: two of the same person, 1/6*d*. Whole length likenesses, 5/–; two 7/6*d*.

Likenesses taken on Horseback, or in open Carriages. Portraits of Horses, Dogs, &c., &c. The figures may be had plain or elegantly bronzed.

What a drop from the old dignity, when " a slight glance " suffices and the commonness of the scissors is an italicised attraction ! Alas for Mrs. Beetham's laborious and costly crystals ; for the portraits worked on to composition with loving care by Miers ! The common scissors had arrived : away with miniatures and Art !

A thin line of print separates Mr. Hubard from the following :

WILL SHORTLY CLOSE

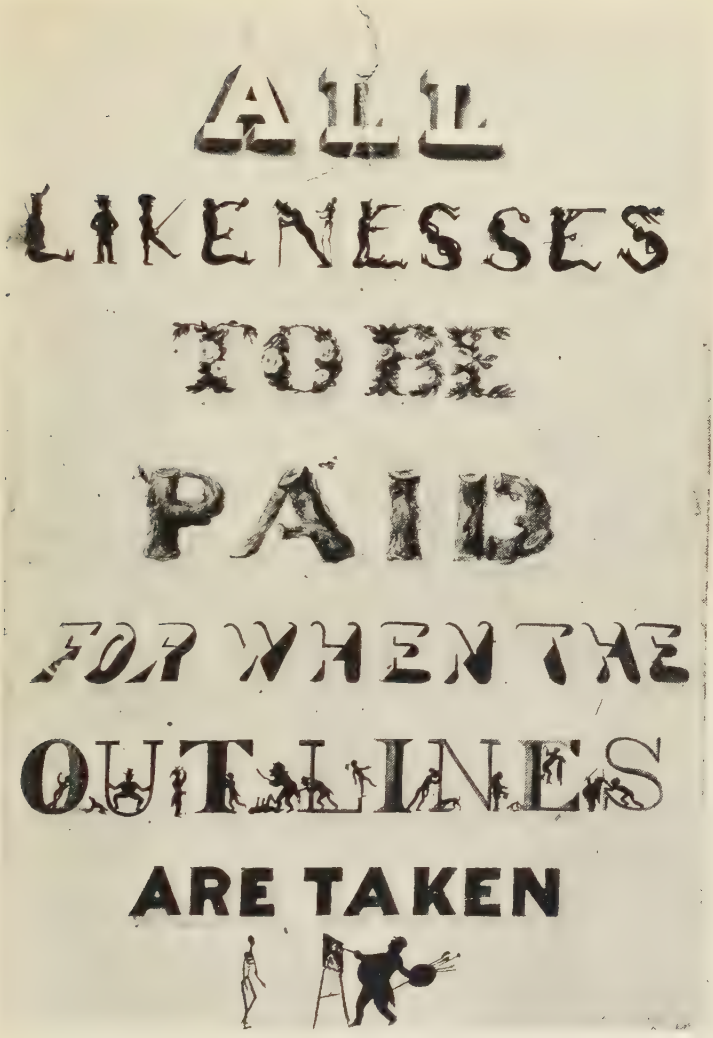
NOW EXHIBITING, in the PANTHEON, Church-Street, M. BARKER & Co.'s GRAND PANORAMA of the Defeat of the Turks by the Greeks, the Republic of Soulia, together with the Battles of Ligny and Waterloo, the Storming of Seringapatam by the British and native troops.

The above interesting subjects are painted on sixteen thousand square feet of canvas represented in eleven different views. Ten thousand figures pass before the spectator as large as life. Movements accompanied by a Military Band.

Admission to the Front Seats, 2/– ; Second 1/6*d.* ; Back Places, 1/– ; Children half price.

There will be an exhibition each day at Eleven, Twelve, Two and Three : and in the evening doors open at Six, commence at Seven. Brilliantly illuminated with gas. The last exhibition at half-past Eight o'clock.

This, too, was in Church Street. At one booth the figures went past—shades of Girtin !—to their Military Music, large as life : in the next, that singularly gifted little boy was snipping free twenty-second likenesses with common scissors. Already the Royal Academeans had retired : and Silhouette was falling beneath the shadow of those sea-side Piers. A late handbill in my possession announces that " THE ARTISTS (from London) " (no name) " at Mr. Daniels, No. 6, Market



MASTER HUBARD'S STUDIO NOTICE

Hand-drawn (10 in. × 7). Hubard's relief stamp in left-hand bottom corner

PLATE 40

[*Facing p.* 194

Place " (no town) " Must positively close next Saturday," and ends :

"N.B. The Artists have regularly studied at the Royal Academy of Arts, British Museum, and most of the Principal Galleries of London : "

but a sample of their work is given on the leaflet, and I do not think that anyone believed them.

On the whole, a study of these advertisements, though it adds much to knowledge, provides almost more in the way of new problems, thanks to the proved multiplicity of method by any given silhouettist. Again, the profilists' habit of adapting other artists' work to the taste of their patrons is here proved more common even than had been expected. That this was done by some of them was known already from their Labels. Two years ago, I bought a very fine silhouette, on plaster or " composition," of a young man, set under a black and gold glass in a brass oval frame such as was used by Miers while at Leeds. Behind this was an unbroken label that neither Mrs. Nevill Jackson nor myself had even seen : that of Houghton & Bruce. Houghton was already known as a profilist whose delicate studies of children are generally attributed to Miers (just as portraits of adults by Lovell risk the same inscription from some one with a little knowledge) : but " Houghton & Bruce " came as something altogether new. The silhouette may be seen at the Victoria and Albert : but the present point concerns the last lines of its label :

" Any having shades by them may have them copied or reduced, the likenefs being preserved, and drefsed in the MODERN TASTE."

Here is, indeed, confusion worse confounded ! Not

grouped only, but redressed ! Even that beloved test, " period," ceases to mean anything. Thomason of Dublin and Mrs. Lightfoot, one remembers, made the same astounding offer, which both copied—with much else—from Miers who put " dreſsed in the present Taste " on his Leeds label. No wonder that beginners are rather wild, at times, as to their attributions ! Close study is the only cure. A long look, for instance, at Plate 5 would show Houghton's treatment of the hair, tighter than that of Miers at any period : and a careful reading of even the few advertisements that I have quoted might result in that confident " By Miers " vanishing from yet more specimens by others.

Unluckily, this new field of research, fascinating though I have found it, did not help me to find what I was really seeking in the Eighteenth Century newspapers :—a clue to the profilist who painted those delicious red-coated silhouettes of Officers around 1790. This is the " mystery " to which I have referred, and with it I must close my chapter.

In 1913, rightly taking up a firm stand for pure Silhouette, and condemning the bronzed high lights and all other refinements under the broad Chapter-head of " Decadence," I dismissed these red-coats with a few stern, but no less loving, words : " There are, however, perfect specimens to which, unhappily, no name can be attached with any certainty at all. Bereft of label and signature alike, the owner who can scribble great names at hazard on their back is either a vain idiot or Hope incarnate. Under this head (so far as I know) fall those splendid soldiers with their red coats and gold buttons. . . .

A CONVERSATION

painted, signed and labelled by J. Field. Full-length profiles by this artist are extremely uncommon

PLATE 41 [*Facing p.* 196

" It is, of course, the proper thing, indeed the only possible, to deprecate all bronze, and still more any colour, on a shadow-picture : yet when I look on these glorious Officers in their mellow colours, nothing less scandalous than water-colour miniatures with blackened faces, I realise in shame how far even the most logical among us sacrifice our principles when we are faced by Beauty."

Must I confess that now, fifteen years later, I have more than thirty of these red-coats in my Flat ? It needs no excuse. They are, as decoration, even more effective than a Miers or a Beetham ; they are rare to a tantalising and irresistible degree, that tempts to the pursuit ; they are—if I may use a phrase that will shock Miss Rose Macaulay—of Army interest, for they show the uniforms of Battalions that, even if sometimes with changed numbers, still exist. These are readily distinguished by the badges and numbers of the old Foot Regiments upon the uniforms. " 2," " 6," and " 25 " —taking those shown in my collection—remain to-day the numbers of Regiments as they were then ; the Queen's, Warwick's and King's Own Borderers respectively ; the 27th, 30th, 35th, 39th, 51st, 56th, 65th, 69th, 86th, 89th, 97th, Foot all survive as Battalions of different districts : only the 100th and 103rd have been disbanded. In many others the badges are clearly seen, though not the numbers : so that somebody with more military knowledge than myself could readily put names to all.

My own interest, I admit, has lain increasingly in the attempt to discover who painted these profiles, rather than what, exactly, they may represent.

Some facts I have discovered as certain, during a long search. This artist worked somewhere in the Isle of Wight, almost certainly at Newport. He painted Officers, usually of the Army. (I have one of a Naval Officer, whom greater optimists most certainly would label " Nelson," for this young man has all the well-known features: but I remember a collection I once saw, compounded almost totally of Duchesses, Generals, Peers and Lady Emmas: so refrain.) He did not, so far as I know, ever paint a civilian; and certainly I never saw a female portrait in his individual style. He did not sign or use a label. Sometimes, not often, he pencilled the sitter's name at the left base of the likeness. Almost invariably he used colour on the uniform: but I have found two specimens where this was not the case. Frequently he would begin a portrait, that seems full of promise as one sees it now, then apparently lose faith (unless the martial sitter failed in patience ?); turn it over: and complete another on its back. Still more significant, I have never yet found a profile by this artist that had not been stuck, apparently by a light sealing-wax, into a scrap-book, in such a way that small fragments of coloured paper have adhered to its four corners, which are sometimes clipped.

Various residents of Newport, including the Town Clerk, have taken a very kindly, if surprised, interest in my attempt to foist a new celebrity upon their Township. That he was a Newport man I am convinced, by evidence too long and various for print. In 1921, to take one instance, I bought nine of these red-coats: and a London dealer, obviously pledged to give no name, told me that he bought them in Newport

" out of an album, belonging to an old lady," who would sell no more, although there were some others. Between now and then I have had frequent reports of solitary specimens seen in old houses of the Isle of Wight. I have never bought one (excepting those nine) unless in the Isle of Wight or in the neighbouring Portsmouth. Mr. Frank Snow, treasurer of the Isle of Wight Historical and Archæological Society wrote, this year, kindly enclosing a very fine red-coat *with the same marks of coming from an Album* and with the name " MAW " at the left base :

" As promised, I looked out the enclosed, which no doubt will be of interest to you. It is the only one I have left out of several dozens which were given to me when I was quite a boy. I was given to understand that when many troops were camped round Carisbrooke way in 1798, an artist here did a number of silhouettes of the various Officers in their gorgeous uniforms."

This was valuable support for my theory, since " here " represents the town of Newport. Moreover, this tradition fits in admirably with all the facts that I have ascertained. The artist was an amateur ; he " took " Officers who came in from the neighbouring Camp ; he stuck them loosely in a sort of *liber Amicorum*, a very common use for profiles in the late eighteenth century under the strong influence of Lavater's volumes. All this would explain the rarity ; the lack of duplicates, frames, labels, or advertisements ; the choice of Officers as subjects. Here was no professional, but an enthusiast, by whom it became the fashion to be taken, as some relief from the bleak camp at Carisbrooke.

Remained the chief problem : this enthusiast's name.

And now indeed has come the moment of my trial, the call for bravery. I have no definite proof yet—and my attempt to advance seems so terribly uphill ! For I maintain, till proved wrong, that this man's name was Buncombe : and though it may look well in type, it is unfortunate as it shall pass from mouth to mouth. I can only murmur, " The ' o ' long as in ' hair-comb ' " ; condemn those who echo, " Bunkum ! " as a quirky crew ; then pass to such proof as I possess.

A Newport man, from whom I bought another lot, said that he had got, with them, some years ago, " a hand-written old notice " stating that they were Buncombe's work. " Mr. Buncombe," (it ran, for I saw and copied it :) " 114, High Street, Newport. Did portraits daily, 1799–1820." Now, this " daily " is a nuisance, for, if correct, it goes against my theory of an amateur. Further, I am informed by a kindly resident of Newport that " no houses were numbered until 1844 : " so that at best the " 114 " could be merely retrospective. " I think, however," the resident's letter continues, " that probably it was the picturesque building called Hazard House, in which General Sir John Moore slept during his last night in England, August 1808." The present owner of this house is said to have " a very nice silhouette (coloured) of her Grandfather " and " a Captain's uniform of the Newport Loyal Volunteers, which were enrolled in 1797 and disbanded in 1812," a period covering the date 1798.

This locating of the house is admitted to be rankest guess-work : but here is at the least another of the red-

PROFILE OF AN OFFICER

The face in black, all other details in colour. "Artist unknown"?
About 1785

PLATE 42 [*Facing p.* 200

coat silhouettes still in its hereditary Island home. And in December 1926, a friend wrote to me: "I think you will be interested to hear that while I was in the Isle of Wight, I saw in a very charming old house, that was dated 1535 and full of old oak panelling, a silhouette portrait of a young man, similar to yours, and written on the back, 'Portrait of my Uncle—by Buncombe of Newport, about 1795.'" Finally, one of mine also bears this name, written behind it; not by a contemporary hand, yet equally not by a modern; just such a note, "By Mr. Buncombe, High Street, Newport," as would be added by someone properly anxious to preserve for posterity the name of an amateur who never signed.

Thus far has my hunt gone: and now I must throw it open to the world, the small world of collectors. If this should result in proving me a feeble sleuth-hound, I shall console myself with the claim to be a good sportsman and rejoice that an agreeable artist has been finally provided with a name more euphonious than Buncombe.

CHAPTER XV

COLLECTIONS

HAVING rightly admitted that no man can be an expert on more than two subjects at the most, I have no right, logically, to start on a chapter that shall discuss possibly a score of collections. The excuse, however, is that in some such division of interests, however dangerous, I claim to find the real fun, the " sport " of collecting. Specialisation may be scientific : but Science is a dull companion for life, and the room of the specialist collector is sure to end by having a faint smell of death.

Secondly—if I must defend my method—I am thinking of the many people who have said to me : " I envy your hobby : but I never can find anything to collect." My own difficulty has always been the opposite : to resist new collections : and if I naturally start with the things that have tempted me successfully, it must not be thought that I am fool enough to think they will appeal to others. The attempt of happy people to push their own tastes, remedies and ideas on to neighbours explains half the misery of life. But, if anybody is really being held back from a delightful life-interest by lack of inspiration, I hope that these few notes on possible collections may strike a spark suddenly at some point or other. On most people, probably their effect will be one of repulsion. " What is this junk," they will ask, " that the man asks us to collect ? "

Let it be remembered that the junk of to-day is the treasure of to-morrow. The great collector is a man who sees in advance what objects in each age deserve to be rescued from decay. The further he gets from a Bond Street dealer's stock, the nearer that he gets to his own age, the more is he a creative artist as collector. This does not mean that if Fate sends him a fine bit of stump needlework, an early impression of a Dürer or a really choice ship model, he ought to reject the offer. These things have come to me, too, and some others also ; my poor Flat is not junk and junk only, does not all await its Future : but of what use would it be for me to urge a beginner to start on model frigates, Dürers or Stuart needlework ? As well at once advise mazers and Old Masters !

Therefore, I say, experiment ; have fun. Even such things as playing cards and fore-edge paintings have fallen, now, under the head of known Collections, catalogued by the smart book-sellers and freely faked. Soon they will rank with china, silver, and the few other objects that we are all told " to " collect.

As for myself, I have owned already to having some six side-shows : smaller collections with which I vary, both in hunting and in decoration, my two special subjects : but when I now try to decide in writing what those six are, I must confess that they swell visibly. How unfairly many things there are that tempt me in antique shops !

Of rolled-paper pictures, certainly, I cannot resist a fine specimen : so let this rank as the first of my side-shows. I beg readers not to imagine my wall plastered with Victorian rolled-paper bouquets or those depress-

ing reliquaries in the same filagree work that come from Continental churches. I fall only to early coats of arms, castles, houses and the like. Moreover, I reject any specimen with white or pale colours in it, for half the charm lies in a singular tone, old and opulent, got by the slightly-faded red or green rolls and their gilded edges. (I hope I need not explain that this work was done by twisting gilt-edged coloured paper into rolls or spirals and arranging them to form a picture.) This soothing richness is lacking almost entirely from the tea-caddies carried out in the same manner a full century later.

When Sotheby's sold a collection of ten such pictures, nearly all heraldic, in 1926, they catalogued them as "c. 1700": and this estimate, which surprised some by its early date, is borne out by a "1695" worked in filagree at the base of a castle in my collection. I feel that collectors who go mad over the other products of this period, in needlework or even beads, have tended partly through ignorance to neglect rolled-paper as a later process. I remember the delight of Lady Sackville, fresh from all her unrivalled treasures at Knole, when she saw, with surprise, the beautiful specimens that I had got together in a very humble Flat off Oxford Street before the War; specimens soon to crinkle up in Hudson's flames. One I would have dearly liked to illustrate here, for it must sound vulgar in description, being a group of lions under trees, all in pure gilt paper. Each animal stood as a complete figure, no mere bas-relief: the art of the maker redeeming the whole from disaster and indeed even creating it a work of beauty. Since the War, I have found fewer.

A CASTLE IN ROLLED PAPER

Not specially fine, except in its mellow colour, but interesting as dated 1695. Size, 11 in. square

PLATE 43 [*Facing p.* 204

Perhaps not many fine ones were made ; each must have been the work of years. Perhaps there are collectors : Sotheby's ten, not very fine, averaged about £20 apiece and I failed to get either of the two best, although I left what seemed to me a thoroughly safe bid.

These heraldic specimens have a great dignity and are, as a rule, carried out in fitting sombreness of colour. Far the most elaborate that I have ever found I bought in Baker Street about six years ago. It is a Royal coat of Arms, exquisite in detail, beautiful in tone, and I regret that Plate 6 cannot display either merit fully. But I admit that, on the whole, I am attracted even more to the humbler castles and houses, primly Queen Anne, that stand on closely-packed green banks inside deep black frames with, sometimes, the faintest hint of old gilt lacquer. Mainly they are dignified, severe : but one of mine has all the intimacy of a doll's house, revealing through talc windows the proper filagree furnishing of each tiny room and peopling its garden with the birds and rabbits familiar in old stump-work. Another, sold at Sotheby's, showed Abraham at his task of entertaining angels, but mixed rolled-paper figures with wax faces : a villainous confusion that, rightly, lowered it in price below any of the others.

Rolled-paper pictures of early date and fine quality are, I think, rare : and in any case a large collection, even if it could be formed, would rob each specimen of its decorative value : but, for this very reason, they form an ideal side-show.

The same is true, to my mind, of glass paper-weights. Five hundred of them would be a sheer nightmare,

whereas a small array in some obscure shelf is decorative and entertaining. I cannot remember why, where, or at what price I bought my first: but, having got that one, I found myself soon with a definite ambition. I determined, before they became too scarce, to get one specimen of each sort that I considered decorative and fine in craftmanship. This soon turned out to be harder than I had imagined, for the types overlap. In getting together, however, what I thought to be a representative twenty, I learnt enough about these paper-weights to see that they provide a good subject for any one who cares about research. Singularly little, so far at least as I can hear, seems to be known about them.

The idea that they are "Bristol paper-weights" is, I feel sure, yet another popular delusion, springing from the fact that two of the prettiest kinds—the gaily crowded *millefiori* and the delicate *lattacinio* (work as fine as lace)—are sometimes marked "B" with a following date. These dates are only four, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849, though forgers have increased their number: and of these the first and the last, being rarest, add yet further value to the specimens that bear them. It was only natural that collectors, seeing the miraculously small "B," should jump to a theory that this was Bristol glass. Unluckily, two facts are against this. There is also a "C" mark, an "S.L.," and others, which I have never seen explained. Certainly they do not fit the "Bristol" theory. Moreover, any dealer who has a great deal to do with these paper-weights will tell you that he gets none from Bristol, but more than half from Paris.

France is, in fact, the birth-place of the so-called Bristol paper-weight: nor is this surprising. The *millefiori* pattern is essentially continental. Its descent can be traced confidently through Venetian glass and, with no great strain on credulity, through Roman. If further proof be needed, I shall unpatriotically point to the only paper-weights proved to be English: those made at the Stourbridge factory. These are, I may explain, the crude specimens with coarse crater-like projections, reminiscent of false teeth and seeming to me almost more repulsive than the Czecho-Slovakian forgeries of later days. Finally, the French fakes beat the English in skill and proclaim this delicate art essentially foreign. "B," "C," and the others are almost certainly the initials of some specially good craftsman.

Some of the types are really amazing in their quality and detail; but it does not follow that these cost the most. The *millefiori* seem fairly common and are the most decorative: a much over-due tribute to the Victorian taste! The three that I found most difficult to get were the basket of fruit, the butterfly hovering above a flower, and the snake. Perhaps these were harder to achieve, or maybe there was less demand. Certainly they do not strike me as beautiful, though the fruit is gaily-coloured and my own special snake (of which I am ridiculously proud, for he is rare,) has not the tame worm-like air of most specimens but is a huge variegated pest of terrifying, slimy-looking fierceness. These three, as the rarest and most vehement, stand on a little rolled-paper mount centrally, flanked by my other specimens in a cubist

arrangement, fenced off by two "Bristol" rulers (these are really English, I think), and backed by a row of those quaint cut prisms, in which a minute painting at the back miraculously presents a vast growing tree in front. I may add that this whole lay-out, which I do not defend æsthetically, is on the bottom shelf of a vast bow-fronted cabinet and stands so low that only those who kneel may see. It is, I admit, what the precious-minded know as "fun." Their amusement would doubtless be increased by a box of glass dominoes, in silver and a pleasantly dark blue, which really may be Bristol.

At one time, what is technically known as "Oriental" looked like being one of my two main collections. I do not mean Oriental china: for, rightly or wrongly, I have never been able to work up any admiration for the china of any nation whatsoever. It has always seemed to me an insipid, pretty-pretty, make-believe. So far as European china goes, I feel its two sorts to be suitable respectively for the breakfast-table and a rather prehistorically minded woman's "boodwah." The Oriental escapes those reproaches, but I do not think it steers clear of monotony. The so-called "Oriental," that still crowds one shelf of my largest cabinet, certainly seemed, at first, to promise an interesting collection. There was enough variety from both points of view, research and decoration. Not only did the sword provide the *tsuba*, the *fuchi* and its other mountings, all exquisitely worked, (for if the Chinese had been artists, the Japanese were craftsmen): but there was the *netsuke* with its dependent *inro*, and a multitude of oddments: lacquered shrines of amazing

DOG

in bird's-eye. Chinese, Ch'ien-lung period (1736–1796)

PLATE 44

[*Facing p.* 208

detail ; glass bottles in blue with a subtle tinge of green ; beautifully carved hard stones, lovely in themselves ; amber, ivory,—no limit to the varied joys of this new subject ! For a while I was very happy with it. Then troubles appeared. The *inro* or medicine-case was a fascinating object in itself, especially the best specimens where lacquering by a true artist was combined with perfect jointing, so that the compartments looked like one. Equally, the early *tsuba* or sword-guard was an object to delight one in its early, more austere form, as a work in pure iron, flawless in design artistically and yet suited absolutely to its purpose. But, I soon had to confess, both these objects had one very serious objection. They were better singly than in battalions. The *inro* either sprawled, graceless as young girls, on my shelves or hung crookedly from long cords, like Bluebeard's wives, behind : the rows of pierced *tsubas* had an inevitable air of the Hotel electric-bell switch. " I like your *key-holes*," kindly-minded visitors would say to me and feel that they had done their duty.

Then I discovered something else. There was no objection, decoratively, to the *netsukes :* these little animals or men or gods in wood, ivory and lacquer, filled a shelf delightfully : but they were, in one sense, a blind-alley subject. So much was known of them already :—there was so much still to know. I bought Joly's monumental work, that was a pleasure, a possession, in itself. I studied. I mugged up, as the vulgar say, a thousand pleasant legends. And I still knew almost nothing. For that I must learn the language. Most of my specimens had seal-bases or inscriptions.

What use to know that your latest *netsuke* represented Daruma crossing Ocean on a leaf; to be conceitedly aware why Daruma did this; when all the time you could not read a tantalisingly long inscription that was flaunted on the back? Almost the last Oriental object that I bought, (and it must be, I admit, six years ago) was a fine piece of amber,—real old amber, full of gracious yellow lights, not the hard redness of a modern composition-fake—carved to show Kwanyin sitting in a tree-bowered shrine, with circumambient dragon. The dealer who sold it to me, now full of regret at the price asked, begs me to sell it back to him if I have ceased collecting Oriental: but how can I do that till I have read the three-column inscription, finely carved in tiny letters, that meanders the whole length of its reverse? Besides, when I quite realised that I was not meant to be a collector of Oriental, I put into an auction only my worst specimens, together with the *tsubas* and *inro* that made my case look like a Museum. I did not sell the exquisitely coloured bottles, the dignified old mirror-cases, the utterly artistic yet ripely humorous statuettes of animals in wood. Thus, though I may have ceased to feel temptation, anyhow at present prices, I still rank Oriental as among my side-shows, for it fills delightfully, with gay yet never vulgar richness, a big shelf.

Ought I to say two shelves? The mention of animals brings me to another, a more lasting, side-show. I cannot resist the lure of dogs and elephants and other such agreeable animals. Being a Flat-dweller, I must not collect them except as caught in stone or metal by an artist: and in this I know no one who has succeeded

WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

Persian jars and Chinese figures used as ornaments for European chests

PLATE 45 [*Facing p.* 210

half so well as the Chinese. Our craftsmen of the middle ages failed, I submit, lamentably to consider the decoration of a modern home. Maybe they were too much inspired by religion. At any rate, I have never discovered the English antique "ornament" —vile necessary word!—that rivals in any way the Oriental. One leaps, I think, from sacred objects straight into the insipid. There is nothing to stand pleasantly upon a Queen Anne chest—nothing but an Oriental elephant or dog!

Let there be no error. These, too, must be early: early and individual; no modern elephants in ebony (except for luck) or dogs in multi-coloured ware with faded ribbon round elongated necks. The shelf that is above my *netsukes* is crowded pell-mell, like a German zoo, with animals: and none is at all recent, none without its Art. The gods that stand among them do not feel ashamed.

I think that early animals in bronze and stone would be a fascinating collection: but they would overwhelm one's home. My own Flat is already over-stocked. I do not believe in ornaments: the multiplicity of them is maddening to guest and servant equally: but there is something lifeless about a chest of drawers that has nothing to break the flat expanse of its top. So far as I go, I give each impartially to some one monster, released from the top shelf, to roam upon at will: and I believe the result to be better than that obtained from Dresden Shepherdesses in all their obvious charm or the vile outline of a Toby jug. These Eastern artists of old could respect the points of an animal, and yet express all its preposterous humour. Coy elephants

with upward glances, fatuously genial dogs, somnolent old horses, ducks with an absurd self-conscious dignity :—such are the occupants of my chest-tops and such the ornaments that I prescribe for the collector if he would save his room from fussiness. Having said that, I ought to reproduce some early specimen of special dignity and distant birth : but weakly I find myself unable to resist the smiling hound, aimlessly good-natured, of Plate 44. With one leg raised to start a scratch, for which he always lacks the final energy of mind, he smiles out at my enchanted guests : and the fact that Museum experts consign him to the late Eighteenth Century does not at all upset his self-complacency. Artists, you see—yes, sculptors even,—turn him round with pleased eyes, despising age, and praise the man, however " late," who thus immortalised in a delicious bird's-eye this dog that may have been a great man's pet but should have been a nation's god and cheerful inspiration, as he is mine, in the time of trial.

Even those austere house-owners who condemn cabinets and ornaments equally, and like bare walls, need not rob themselves of a collector's joy. There must always be some piece of furniture of which the drawers are not needed for clothes or other necessaries. This is the place for a nucleus, which may grow into a collection. I myself have a beautiful little walnut bachelor-chest, pure Queen Anne, a gem in both essential ways of wood and workmanship. In the five tiny drawers that such a minature chest can hold I place, appropriately, those little movable books with which children of former centuries were entertained. There is naturally the well-known booklet,

A DRAKE

Earthenware in imitation of carved wood. Chinese, Ch'ien-lung period (1736–1796)

PLATE 46

[*Facing p.* 212

Frank Feignwell's Attempts to Amuse his Friends, published at the Temple of Fancy in 1811: with *Little Fanny*, *Little Henry*, and the others like them, where morality usurped the place of effort at amusement. In all these there are (or should be, rather) various dresses or suits and hats (which last are often missing) to fit the various changes in fortune of poor Fanny, the ingenious attempts of resourceful Frank, as related in prim verselets. Rather incongruously, it is the head of Fanny or Frank that is put into these different bodies: not their clothes that put on and take off. I therefore have all the more praise for what I regard as easily the best juvenile book in my modest collection. I bought it from a book-seller's catalogue, some years ago, and I have never seen another like it, though the toy was clearly made in large numbers, to judge by the expensive manner in which it has been produced. Possibly some kind reader may have a named specimen and let me know: but I can see, on mine, no place from which a label could be missing. In a perfectly plain contemporary slip-case is an equally plain book: boards bound with red leather at the back and sides. In this, folded, is a fine aquatint of a wooded landscape, with sea in the back-ground. Almost with certainty one would put this down as Ackermann's best work. Inside it is the cut-out figure, also in fine aquatint, of a young man in open-necked shirt and white knee-breeches. Flatten the landscape; lay him upon it so that his feet fit the two dents in his shadow; you are free to dress him, "au choix." The choice is generous. Twelve sorts of uniform or dress lie in twelve brown-paper dockets, each with its own

printed label : " Walking Dress," " Naval Uniform," " Monk's Habit," " Turkish Costume," " Quaker's Habit," " Mourning Suit," " German Hussar," " Full Dress in the Year 1700," " Knight in full Armour," " Officer's Uniform (Land Forces)," " Gentlemen's Evening Costume," " French Uniform (Imperial Guard)." Each of these is complete. First, if prudent or practised, one puts on the stock ; then the trousers ; next the boots ; the waistcoat ; the coat. Finally, at a correct angle, the hat and the cane, sword or musket. All of these are neatly cut out, excellently printed in artistic colours. When the youth is fully dressed, the effect in each case is of a print in brilliant condition. Presumably this was a toy : but it is almost good enough to have been made for the use of artists. Certainly my copy has never been inside a nursery. I wish I were a more trustworthy authority on Costume : but, having had a Classical education, (for which, otherwise, I am intensely grateful) I lack Modern History entirely. I will therefore say no more than that, to my inexpert eye, the costumes seem Eighteenth Century for the most part,—cocked hats for the Officers—and that, to my ignorant mind, their choice points to a Napoleonic period. I shall be surprised if I am, at any rate, wrong about Ackermann having printed this delicious gewgaw.

An earlier date can be safely given for another group of these movable toys that fill my little flap-top walnut chest. One on my desk before me has, above the first picture :

HARLEQUIN IN PRISON.

London, Publish'd as the Act directs, August 31, 1776, by H. Roberts, no. 56, Opposite Great Turn Stile Holborn. Price Sixpence.

Below, Harlequin is seen, multi-coloured, heavily chained, in a grim-looking cell. A rhyme records his discontent, and how he longs to be "once more at Heavenly Liberty." Just above his head, the page is divided into two. Lifting the top flap, one sees a new verse, describing how a pair of Witches, with Sword of mighty magic Force, befriend him. Also one sees half of a new picture, which fits—however roughly—on to the lower half of the first seen and thus provides a second. Now lift that bottom half, and plate three appears. Harlequin is free: the Witches with their brooms hold him by either hand, and at his feet lie all the chains and shackles.

"His Chains are off and Harlequin
Don't heed his Keeper of a pin.
The Witches Vanifh in a trice
And all Seems very Snug and nice."

In this ingenious manner twelve plates are provided on the four pages of this little book, which measures only $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 3 and is bound in plain blue paper covers. The manner in which the pictures join may seem a trifle arbitrary, for in one Harlequin is complete but, as only half of his Keeper appears, he smites with his magic Sword a headless man: but the intention is absolutely clear. Each of the twelve is meant to be perfect, and in some of my others there is more actual achievement. The prints are not merely quaint; they have charm, and frequently concern the Italian Comedy. I feel that these early, fragile trifles must be extremely rare. I have bought what I saw; never asking for them; and my life-bag would not be much above a dozen. I commend this search ardently to those seek-

ing a collection. Among those that I possess the earliest is dated 1771 and numbered as " Book 6 " of those published by Robt. Sayer at " 6*d*. Plain : 1/- Coloured," (*Queen Mab, or the Tricks of Harlequin*), whilst the latest (*Robinson Crusoe*, mixed up still with Harlequin, and a most lively *Robin Hood*) were published by B. Tabart & Co. as late as 1809 : so that there must be here a broad hunting-ground for any serious collector, and the booklets are delightful.

It occurs at this point, even to my egotist-collector mind, that few things can be more tiresome for others than to read descriptions of objects that I myself chance to admire or love. Enough of my side-shows ! Furtively opening in turn the many drawers of a print-cabinet, thus exposing for a brief moment of ecstasy their shamefully various contents, then gloating over the serried ranks of pleasant oddments on a dozen shelves, I turn regretfully from so many good topics and end this chapter with a brief catalogue of Possible Collections.

Pocket sun-dial compasses, and all such gadgets of astronomy (the decorative only, those by Butterfield of Paris preferred) ; miniature globes of the World in black shark-skin cases, with the stars as coloured animals inside (as early as can be : before Australia was charted, anyhow) ; little boxwood figures or groups of the sixteenth or seventeenth century (as choice as the later ones were vile (see Plate 16)) ; perpetual calendars before 1800 in wood or silver ; pipe-stops carved as animals ; pictures painted on cut marble, so as to utilise the marking (carefully selecting those only that were done by artists and rejecting amateur

PAINTER'S SAMPLE CLOCK-FACE

Faith, Hope, Charity and Justice. Inscribed at top, "Hagar and Ishmael," also trade number, "187 P." On copper in oils, 8 in. × 6

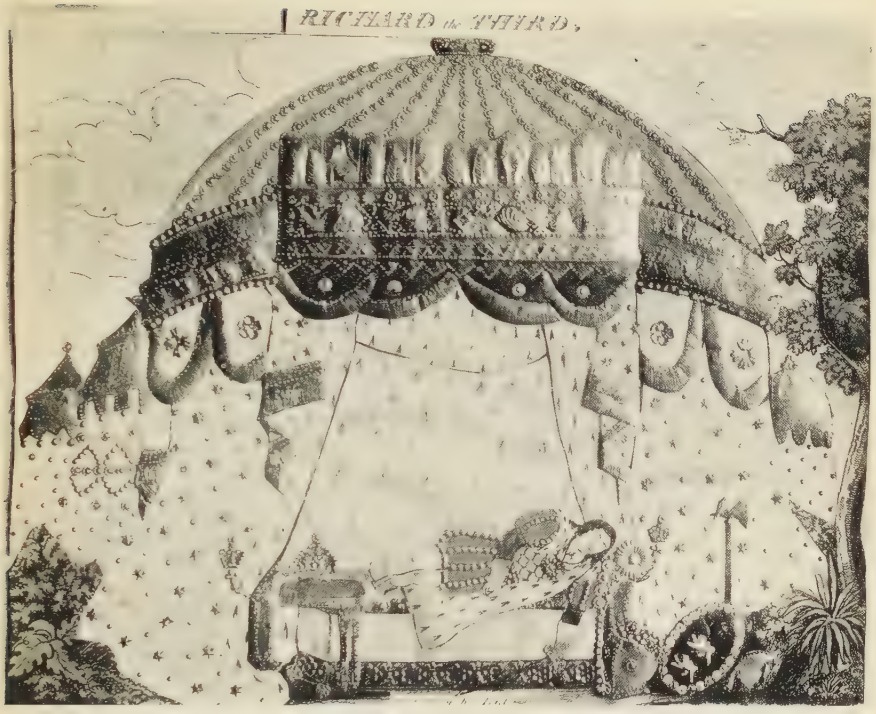
PLATE 47

[*Facing p.* 216

attempts) ; knife-handles, with or without the knives, in carved horn, ivory or wood ; raised birds of gorgeous hue in gouache, pushed out from cardboard (some with a wide landscape background, signed by W. Hayes about 1775) ; scrap-books (not too late or relying too much on the Press) ; carved nuts, frequently Napoleonic in interest, as carved by French prisoners ; armorial bearings painted on slabs of highly lacquered wood (perhaps the show-pieces from carriage-builders' shops) ; samples of clock-faces signed and numbered by the artist willing to provide them ; valentines (keeping very early, before Mass Production : specimens hand-painted, with mirrors for Beauty, books of love, and classic Graces behind distant-seeming gauze) ; silk-woven pictures by Stevens or the piratical S. Lotz (economical, but scarcely beautiful by present standards) ; decorative buttons (often finer than one would at first suppose) ; very small oil-paintings (a neglected and most fertile field) ; cut-paper pictures or fancy silhouettes (the early specimens full of *naïve* Art ; the later hideously fine) ; chap-books (starting with Dicey of Northampton, but not ending with Catnach : carrying on to the delicious Flying Fame books that Lovat Fraser issued in ordinary and in limited editions) ; models of pet dogs in brown wax now as hard as stone ;—all these seem to me to have some interest and none to be beyond hope of purchase, even nowadays, in the outlying shops. Any six of these would form a pleasantly assorted bunch of second strings for a serious collector.

Freak pictures, on which a whole book could be written, would provide an ambitious subject for a first-

string or main collection. It would range from the distorted picture and its rectifying glass (of which the finest instance may be seen in our National Gallery, Holbein's *Ambassadors*), through countless varieties ; some ugly, others curiously decorative and restful,—flowers in cut paper, such as Mrs. Delaney and her circle made ; birds of many feathers (a book of 156 feather-pictures, mainly birds, made by an Italian in 1608, was lately catalogued by Dobell at £175) ; spangle pictures, often combined with silk dresses laid on to old coloured prints, (opening on to another big subject, dressed prints ;) the later tinsel picture (avoiding the single figures of actors as too frequent : concentrating rather on Napoleon and Godiva or King Richard resting in gorgeous pavilion with a stack of shining armour cast off, but quite a lot still on) ; paintings in sand (ranging from the magnificent sporting subjects, after Morland and others, carried out by Benjamin Zobel in a special room of George III.'s palace, to those humble recent efforts in sand from Alum Bay) ; horrors in shells, leather (backed by the label of an ingenious tailor), even seaweed ; amazingly artistic adaptations of huge paintings by Pannini, worked in human hair round 1790 ; deep-framed edifices built in cork, not all of them much later ; prints of a dozen queer kinds, from those that open in unexpected places to Spooner's *Transformations* or *Protean Views* of 1838, where the Thames Tunnel, held up to a light, changes, however dimly and dubiously, into Queen Victoria's Coronation, whilst the same Royal young lady rises, more successfully, from a pink rose or abruptly visits a hitherto deserted Temple Bar ; prints containing con-



TINSEL PICTURE

"Richard the Third: Richard in his Tent." The robes and pavilions are of silk

PLATE 48 [*Facing p.* 218

cealed silhouettes, like the Hidden Faces competitions of our present newspaper, such as "'THE ROSE, SHAMROCK & THISTLE," with eight faces—George IV., Blucher, the King of Prussia, George III., the Emperor of Austria, Wellington, Louis XVIII. and the Emperor of Russia,—or that, more simple, of George III. with Queen Charlotte, a specimen of which has been lent to the London Museum by her Majesty the Queen, together with a silhouette portrait of the same monarch on a white china vase, inscribed in gilt, "Mercy and Truth Preserve the King!"

Will anyone, however, choose a subject at my breathless dictation? I much doubt. Would it be even wise? Is it not better to strike out a line totally your own; to trace it, maybe, parallel with your own hobby? If you enjoy boxing as I do, there are many Boxiana, from blood-hued Rowlandsons to the japanned tin tray, full of ferocity and information, that was made by the Carpathian Silver Tray Company of New York to commemorate the great fight between Corbett and Fitzsimmons in 1897. If you are a dog-lover follow, before it is too late, the admirable example set by Mr. Cousens, the famous canine Surgeon. He has been a canine Surgeon: he has thought nothing canine alien from himself. Dogs of every sort he has collected, not as a connoisseur of anything but dogs; and thus his collection, when he came to scatter it at Sotheby's last year, included not only china dogs that brought Woolworth's emporia to mind, but many valuable Roman or Egyptian hounds, old half-sacred Chinese guard-dogs, heads or whole figures in fine English china, and even—presumably to keep them happy—a small battalion of cats.

Some of these specimens made a connoisseur or Art-expert weep, but the whole effect was sheer joy to dog-lovers. And, as our Press says, the bidding was brisk.

Go and do likewise, after your own lights. Think nothing about values ; still less about Fashion ; buy what you love, pay the price that things are worth to you and you (probably) alone. The rest, believe me, shall be added unto you.

CUT-PAPER PICTURE

of an earlier "post-war" era (1815 ?). "Peace to the Nation and Bread for the Poor: All cut With Scissors," the hearts in silver, size 10½ in. × 8

PLATE 49

[*Facing p.* 220

CHAPTER XVI

THE MERE MODERNS

I USE that derogatory " mere " because, to most men and even to many collectors, an artist means nothing till he has been dead for a dozen years. Gainsborough, that great painter whose *Harvest Wagon* has lately fetched £72,000, did not, we are told almost incredibly, rise to the 100 guinea level in auction rooms within the full posthumous period that I have mentioned. We know for certain, from a contemporary diarist, that Raeburn charged 100 guineas for his enormous full-lengths, 50 for the half-length, and 30 for a Kit-cat. I do not know whether the magnificent full-length of *The MacNab* has changed hands lately: but I well remember it selling for £24,000 a good many years ago. Now, probably, it would fetch double.

Old Masters, we must always remember, are not born. They are made by the dealers. It has been proved lately, in the case of French impressionists and others, that clever collectors can anticipate the dealers.

Myself (I repeat humbly), I lack totally the snobbery which makes most Englishmen admire the art of almost any other nation than their own. Possibly because I am half Irish, I persistently believe in British Art. I hate this recent outcry of " Buy British " as applied to Art. Charity and patriotism are not needed. If we must really suffer a slogan, it should run : " Buy the best : it's British."

Many of these Frenchmen, boosted (as the vulgar say) into big sellers, have very little but their foreign names to recommend them. The same curious phenomenon may be seen in the world of Music. There are known cases where an " -ovski, " or something equally good-sounding, added to the name of a British performer, has saved him from oblivion and starvation. This is not to say that there are no good foreign artists. It is merely to add there are many admirable English artists. That may seem obvious : but is frequently forgotten. Not always will this special snobbery endure in a world rapidly purging itself of smug humbug : and those who buy twenty good British pictures for the price of one slap-dash daub by some contemptuous " great " Frenchman may yet find that they are wise.

Myself, I confess that I am, above everything, an antique-collector : yet my largest room is given totally to Moderns, amongst whom Steinlen and Modigliani are the only foreigners, whilst one side of my passage wall is cheered with *Eton* (Plate 15) and many other admirable drawings by that great natural humorist in line, H. M. Bateman. From the beginning I flirted, rather tamely, with the living painters : but not, in my early days, with those that are now called, rather foolishly, either Futurists or Moderns. I had always found myself attracted to the work of Sidney H. Sime since, in my Oxford days, I had seen an interview with him illustrated by a reproduction of his *Wild Beast Wood :* a weird symphony in greens, wherein bogey-looking beasts of prey crawled out from a sinister forest on their lawless occasions. I proceeded to buy Sime's

WILD BEAST WOOD,

by S. H. Sime, in oils (30 in. square). Man's ancestral terror of woods is eerily suggested by sacrificing mere accuracy to a statement

PLATE 50 [*Facing p.* 222

mystical water-colours, even his delicious caricatures, whenever the chance offered : not often, for he never sent them to an exhibition and owners very seldom sold.

One day, about four years before the War, when I was living in such moderate comfort as falls nowadays to a moderately successful Novelist, I opened an envelope addressed in an unknown hand, found in it a cheque for £100, and read, to my astonishment, these few concise words :

" Dear Desmond,

" I fear you must have had rather a hard struggle. I now enclose you a cheque for a hundred pounds.

" Your affectionate Godfather,

" ____ ____."

I feel quite sure, and felt sure then, that I ought to have invested this windfall in some good security and virtuously spent, each year, the five resultant pounds. As a matter of fact, I sat down, within an hour, and wrote to Sime. He had, at that time, the reputation of being " very difficult." I had sat next him, feeling that I ought to quake, at the old Yorick Club, where he was a god, serene under his brilliant burlesques of the Members, with which its walls were hung. I could not see his " difficulty." I took it to be merely a strong personality, resented—as always—by far lesser men. I wrote with confidence ; told him, with youthful condescension, that I liked his work ; related my good fortune frankly ; asked if *Wild Beast Wood* was still in his possession (I had heard he was " difficult," you see),

and if so, its price. Sime, whether flattered or amused, wrote back a delightful letter. *Wild Beast Wood*, though he had worked on it for many years, was not "really finished," but should be mine for £50.

I have always regarded this as a very pleasant episode. Sime had walked in his own furrow, and thus been collected by a few enthusiasts, of whom Lord Howard de Walden was and still is the chief. He had always told enquiring dealers to go to that Hell, of which he has been the best painter ; ("*Hell*," in fact, came briefly from my valet's lips, when a recent Bishop of Winchester, occupying my room at Clayesmore during a Retreat, asked "What does that picture represent, there ?") Yet here he was, this man said to be so difficult, selling his admittedly best picture, a large oil, to a stranger at a quarter the price he could have got from one of his rich admirers. Moreover, when it was burnt in my fire and I wrote, regretting sincerely that such an individual work had been lost to the world for ever and asking whether he could possibly accept a commission to paint it again, he actually—though not for some agonising years—recaptured his old inspiration and did indeed re-create for me my well-loved *Wild Beast Wood*. Those (and I know them to be many) who remember vividly, as I did, that old reproduction of about 1900, and compare it with Plate 50, will see that the beasts have, in Sime's imagination, come forward an inch or two meanwhile from their wood, but that he has miraculously recaptured his first ecstasy and gained (if one allows for colour lost in reproduction) the old authentic shudder, the fatal beauty of that thick-spread forest.

Not content, this patient man listened to my second plea and saved from destruction in the same way, later, a second oil that fire had destroyed. This was *The Statue in the Grass*, where an arrangement in blue suggests the wistful beauty of night no less successfully than the greens had conveyed its hereditary terror.

Sime, however, more than most alleged " geniuses " whom I have met, has something of the real spark in him—his overwhelming presence, as of a chunky Chinese idol ; his shattering conversation ; his knowledge of the paints, that he himself mixes, with the loving care of an Old Master, in his rustic cottage-studio ; his recondite knowledge of the Apocalypse ; above all, his small output and contempt for fame. He has only to die and the inevitable Memorial Exhibition will introduce an era of Sime-hunting and big prices. I hope, however, that he will not hurry.

I forget by now what other idols I had in those old days among the living, except that I recall an odd episode about the work of that great decorator, Brangwyn. Haldane Macfall, novelist and art critic, had thought enough of my modest " modern department " to say " It ought to include a Brangwyn," but, in the absence of further cheques from my unknown Godfather, I could not at that time see my way to this. Staying at Brighton, however, a few weeks afterwards, and happy in the combing of its many antique shops, I suddenly remembered Macfall's saying and decided to act on one of my life-long principles—if possible, buy books in a picture shop and pictures in a book shop. I entered an antique shop and asked at once,

" Do you know any one here with a Brangwyn for sale ? " just as though that artist had died in the eighteenth century. The dealer looked surprised and said he didn't.

Suddenly he dashed to the door.

" Mr. —— ! " he shouted to a passer-by. For a minute or so the two stood talking, then entered the shop together. " Mr. ——" said the dealer, " has a fine Brangwyn he says he would sell."

Mr. —— described the drawing. It was in bold water-colour, large, and it represented a lot of old-fashioned barges sailing down a river with a lot of trumpeters and banners, and in short a lot of other decorative things. He had had it for some years, ever since he moved from London. I could see it after 5 p.m. next day. So saying, Mr. —— left the shop.

" If *he's* got it," said the dealer, " it'll be a good one. He was in the art material business, paints and so on, years ago in Town. He knew all the artists."

I could scarcely sleep that night, for I had recognised, I felt sure, the special " lot " of things referred to. This must be the original design for *The Procession of the Barges*, which Brangwyn had painted as one of the decorations for the Hall of the Skinners' Company !

When next day—horribly soon after five—I saw the bold colour and sweeping design (far better, to my taste, than the finished painting) of this full-coloured mediæval water pageant, I could scarcely bear to ask the price, and when I found it a fifth of what I had expected, so that I could well afford it, I was nearly swooning. Even Modern collecting, it seems, can

produce its thrills. This purchase did not, of course, help Brangwyn ; but even then he did not need assistance.

This success encouraged me, but I do not remember what else I bought and they are long since burnt. Certainly I had one or two fine early drawings by my great friend, Claud Lovat Fraser.

It was Lovat Fraser who, after the war, introduced me to my present love, the so-called English Moderns. These have, I fear, dethroned even Brangwyn, but Sime remains, for it is part of his greatness that he stands, and I believe will always stand, alone.

Lovat Fraser, apart from his delightful personality and pleasant old-world Art, was in many different ways a really remarkable man. He had the rapidity of Rowlandson (whose work he very much admired) with his reed pen. Often I have seen him, sitting amid a group composed of his wife, daughter and half a dozen of his countless friends, talk gaily while his hand cunningly worked at some successful drawing. He was an omnivorous collector of everything artistic without limit of age. He had, too, the great gift of Friendship, and it was through his notorious kindness that I came up first against the fine work being done by our young experimental artists.

" Have you a spare ten pounds ? " he asked me in his own charming way soon after the War, when I was settled again into a Flat in Portland Place, so that he could guess all to be well with me at present. " If so, do go along to ——'s studio and say I said I knew he'd let you see his work." Those who knew and loved " Lovat " (as everybody called him) will recognise this

tact and kindly thought as absolutely characteristic of his nature.

I went along to the address he gave me, and on the ground floor of a depressing street I found a young artist in flannel trousers and a yellow sweater, with a plucky and decorative wife. I did my little part and asked humbly if I might see his drawings. He brought some of them out.

I want to be quite honest about this experience for the sake of others. I now possess many drawings by this special artist (whose name nobody shall draw from me), and I agree with Lovat Fraser that he is of those few whose work, so far as any contemporary can judge, is certain to endure. But at the first sight of them, accustomed as I was to take the Royal Academy as England's criterion of Art, I was puzzled and dismayed. I wanted to be kind; they were delightful people. I simply could not find the proper thing to say. Education allows for almost everything but Art.

This young man, I could see, was intelligent; indeed, intellectual. He was not a shallow poseur seeking to astound. He was, further, sincere. His faintly coloured drawings, indeterminate at first sight and baffling at a second look, could not be popular except after a first struggle; and he was clearly devoted to his wife. Lovat Fraser had said that he lacked money. Oh yes, he was certainly sincere. But about what exactly?

It was clear, even to me, that he had not attempted in any sense to copy Nature. He was not even such a photographer as is now called, bitingly, "artistic";

A SAMPLER IN NEEDLEWORK

This " Futurist " design (18 in. × 12) was worked in 1794 by Maria Brown, " taught by M. Smith, Devizes."

PLATE 51

[*Facing p.* 228

one who slurs the outlines by a slight failure to focus properly. Each line was clear cut, soundly drawn. The whole was what puzzled. If this artist had not tried to imitate Nature, yet it was clear abundantly that he must love and understand her. In some sense even he interpreted her essence, though what he showed was not what I personally had ever seen. The shapes, the forms, at any rate, were pleasant and put together in a pleasant rhythm. If the colours were faint, my dear Rowlandson, too, had never been one to splash the cruder paints about. In short, all this interested me. Besides, the man was alive, splendidly alive below that yellow sweater, alive and full of hope. So was his young wife. They fed, worked, cooked and slept in this room, broken up by screens. He had some secret vision—secret from me—of what he wished to do, and she believed in it. To Hell with antiques ! I bought the drawing that seemed to me best. I took it home. I looked upon it long and earnestly.

I do not wish to indulge in the vice of self-praise, but naturally I enjoy it no less than other mortals, and I must admit that this was clever of me. I find now that people much older and (I hope) wiser than I was then are in a strange hurry about Art. " I don't think I like the Moderns," or " I don't understand this sort of picture." One glance and they are off, the very same people who would never hope to understand good poetry or music on a first swift hearing. I remember noticing this at the first show in London of the Italian Futurists, Marinetti and his lot, before the War. Giggling women and explosive men burst in, exercised their alleged sense of humour—" That must

be a woman": "Oh no, it's an Alpine sunset"—and burst out after a full shilling's worth of unwholesome Fun. I myself did not understand those artists. I hated their blurred trains, meant to suggest speed but recalling to me my own childish efforts to portray the movement of a donkey's wagged tail by drawing fifteen separate tails. At the same time I stood long before the big canvases reflecting that these grown men must mean something, and in the end two at least yielded me their message. I still remember the City that grew, like a prophetic spirit, behind the toiling navvies. I recall the thrill of those strangely violent zigzag movements that did, finally, suggest tumult and revolution. All of this had escaped me at the first glance. Few people stopped to give a second.

I wonder how many delights we blind humans miss by not letting our capacities have time to develop, or even by never testing them at all? I remember a friend of mine, planted in bed for a long illness, sending in despair for Plasticine and modelling the head of some one who attended him. That bust was seen by a great sculptor and started my friend upon a new career. He had never even dreamt that such a gift was latent in him. In the same way, how many people have the patience to let their artistic taste develop? Whilst quite young, they Know What They Like; later they end by liking only what they know. In their nursery there was perhaps that once famous picture, "*I'se Taller than 'oo.*" They found this very "pretty." They didn't really, but they thought they did. It was actually the story that appealed to them. If the title of the picture had been lost, they would

never have admired this futile woman standing upright on a carpet beside a very tall child standing upright on a chair, for it had no composition, no design, no nuffink. It was what I should like to call *Inscriptional* Art. A little later, if they were Victorian-born, their young manhood was thrilled by a series of so-called " Problem Pictures " by a Royal Academician now frequent in his denunciation of young artists. One of these, I remember, showed four people of assorted sex recently engaged in playing cards. It was called *The Cheat*. The problem was : find the cheat. This I should codify as *Serial* Art. And so the game went on. The men were very much like men, the women splendidly like women, the child on the chair terribly like a child on a chair. These pictures relied on accidentals to provide their charm. I feel sure that *I'se Taller than 'oo* would have been thought less " pretty " if called *The Child Cheat*. During my last half mile at a recent Academy exhibition I was impeded by a vast crowd surging round a special picture and, being an eternal optimist, hoped for some real work of Art at last ; a work that had not merely imitated some lovely woman or dreary man, but had selected, interpreted, said something that let us see, not merely the sitter, but the painter's soul. I faced disillusion. It was another of those ghastly Academic children. " Look," said somebody behind me, " her leg seems absolutely to *stand out* as if in a stereoscopic view."

That might be the epitaph for one school of Art : a school to which, alas, the present big men of the Royal Academy seem irrevocably pledged. It has inherited so many tricks, perspective and the rest ; it is so pleased

with them, so slick, so well content to imitate and yet be left constantly a few feet behind.

After all, reflect a little. This so-called representation—what chance has it ever got ? Even if it could still rival the greater men who practised it and hung their works on those same walls off Piccadilly, it would be putting up a most unequal conflict with the force of Nature. Copy and imitate as much as it may, it cannot, like Nature, make its closely copied leaves to wave in the wind ; its flowers may show every tendril, but they have no scent ; its cows are truly bovine, but they possess no lethargically soothing moo. Myself, I should prefer a real cow, nor can I believe that it would cost as much.

Foiled and bitter, these would-be plagiarists of Nature turn around upon their young, more experimental rivals and snarl : " Bah, you're distorting facts. There's nothing in Nature like that. You're not playing the game."

The answer is : they are playing a different game. Leave them alone, and see what they can do with it. Some say it is a new game : others think it is the game from which technical discoveries in painting drew the Victorians stupidly aside. They claim, some of these new artists, to descend direct from the Old Masters. That charge of distortion, at any rate, won't wash. Those who make it must, were they but honest with themselves, admit that even the vaunted copyists of Nature, nay the very photographers themselves, select a point of emphasis ; arrange what shall show, what not ; make no attempt (unless rank, push-the-button amateurs) to let Nature speak in her own often incon-

THE END OF THE STEPS

Oil painting by Paul Nash (24 in. × 20). This reproduction loses the luminous beauty of its original, but shows its solidity of design and classic lack of inessentials

PLATE 52 [*Facing p.* 232

venient guise. Nor is this all. Anyone who has sat through the exhibition of such artless photographs will know that Nature herself is, in fact, a champion distorter. Can this be dear little Agnes dancing gracefully? Can that really be our lovely horse in action? That stiff V-shaped thing can't be the sea-gull we saw floating, motionless, with wings extended below Beachy Head?

These sticklers for truth to Nature, our dear enemies of distortion, must first read Bishop Berkeley, then answer Pilate's question: "What is truth?" Were official photographs of trenches really as "like" as Paul Nash's suggestive drawings of them?

What does it matter, however, since we realise that Art is not abstract truth, but man's highest form of self-expression after prayer? Prayer is the speech of man's soul to his God: Art the speech of one soul to another. Therefore listen awhile. Do not dash off: give it time. The message may not be too easy. Reflect how even words, written, may be fatally misunderstood. How much more difficult, because less obvious, to speak through the medium of design!

Unluckily, Art is not taught in English schools, so that there are millions who honestly believe, even to a point of anger, that any painter who neither tells a story nor paints "what he sees" possesses the lie in his soul. They think such an artist to be "modern" or—if they are a little high-brow—"primitive and negroid"; take your choice! They do not realise that Paul Sandby's eight-foot women were "Distortion"; that Raphael practised "Design"; that Rowlandson painted three separate pictures of Eel Pie

Island, now in my possession, and in the third inserted a non-existent clump of trees, (after a masterly between-whiles sketch) to help his "Composition." There is nothing "Modern" nothing scandalous, in these processes of adaptation and selection. They are, in one word, Art.

Certainly the public is not to be blamed, but what must we say of its leaders? The Royal Academy has still prestige, derived from the great days; is still the arbiter of Art for English homes. Yet what is its attitude to the young painter, sincerely trying to get beyond the present stand-still copy-our-elders theory that has made British art the mockery of Europe? In my evening paper for March the sixteenth of this year, I read:

BOLSHEVIST ART.

"DYING, AND THE SOONER DEAD THE BETTER," SAYS MR. ——.

Mr. ——, R.A., who is painting a picture of the *Victory*, as she was in her fighting days at Trafalgar, said in an interview to-day:—

"I was passing the window of an art shop in London last week, and there was an extraordinary thing, like a pattern, in the window. A man gazing at it remarked: 'What on earth is that?'

"I replied to him, 'That is Bolshevism.'

"You could not trace any resemblance to anything. It was simply an arrangement of colour. Of course, the canker is widespread, and, on the Continent, you see much more of it than you do here.

"But this sort of art is dying, and the sooner it is dead the better. If there is a style, it is the style of ignorance."

Since then, unless my morning paper lies, the very President of our Royal Academy has let himself write or say, (it was in "Sayings of the Week" or some such column): "Bolshevism in Art is a thing of the past." Mr. ——, R.A., in the intervals of painting the *Victory* "as she was," pins the vile political label, "Bolshevik,"

EEL-PIE ISLAND,

by Rowlandson, in water-colour (11 in. × 7). The third version, with central clump of trees inserted. Forged signature in watered ink

PLATE 53

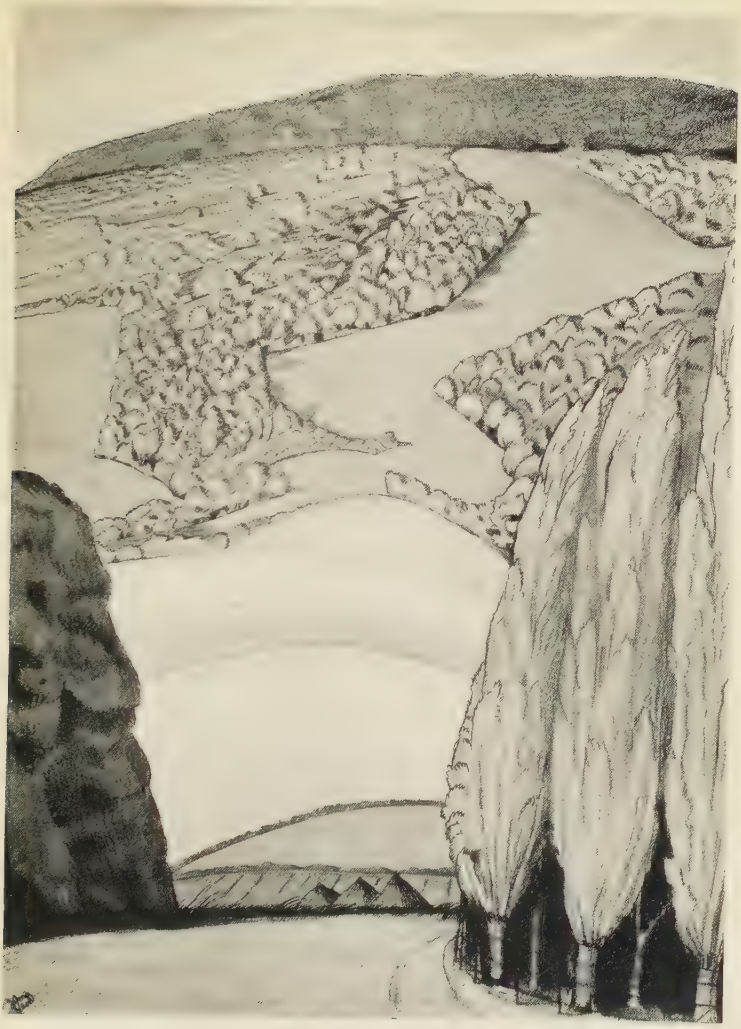
[*Facing p.* 234

upon his younger rivals : then his President declares, next month, that this disease has killed them. It would be farcical, were it not tragic. Can the President really not remember the Pre-Raphaelites, (from whom his own work would seem to have descended) and the wild outburst that their new theories brought on their heads from elders ? Many horrors are alleged—wrongly, I still believe,—to cluster round old age, but this would be indeed the climax of horror, if a man should forget even the days when he was young.

Let it not be thought that I, in my turn, condemn narrowly the older schools. They did good work, but they are standing still, and Art can never afford that. Still less can it afford to throw dirty words, taken from other spheres, at those who work earnestly for progress. There is nothing Bolshevistic, in any sense, about " an arrangement of colour," even if it should be " like a pattern." Probably it *was* a pattern. Pattern is a terribly important thing : and colour is another : arrangement a third. What Mr. ——, R.A., saw through that window may, indeed, have been a work of art. Equally, it may have been incompetent. One great and obvious truth must never be forgotten. There were great Old Masters ; there were hideously bad old painters. There are still a few excellent painters in the Academy tradition : there are many who set one's teeth on edge. There are, in short, many totally incapable people who insist on painting in every invented style. The " Moderns," so-called, were not likely to escape. Do not judge them by one daub in a window. I judge the Academy by their depressing roomsful. I see delightful subjects, I see a slickness of technique. I

look in vain for stimulation, for anything that speaks from soul to soul. I say that this may be good painting. I totally deny that it is Art.

Who is right? "Time alone will tell." George Moore was thought a lunatic when, in *The Confessions of A Young Man*, (1886), he made claims, then thought extravagant, for Manet, Degas, Monet and the rest: claims that even the longest grey beard would, by now, not wag to deny. I will be no less dashing and state, in all sincerity, my belief that, since the most popular artists of a period are seldom those chosen by the next, these very Royal Academicians who now denounce the "Moderns" will be themselves forgotten long before the men they are attacking. Nor will it be long. The tide has turned already. Art Galleries of Bond Street, stacked but lately with heavy gilt frames bearing the letters "R.A." or "A.R.A." below them, have opened, one after the other, rooms that sell the works of our young painters. The wisest collectors have turned from sheep in sun-lit lanes, however accurate, to something more brave and artistic. If any man desires to emulate them, I say: buy Paul Nash, John Nash, William Roberts, Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell, Mark Gertler, and—for sculpture—Eric Gill, with that fodder of the stunt Press, Epstein. The time will come, soon, when you will prove, I believe, to have been wise in your own generation. If you are young and seek a sporting throw with even younger men, then I prescribe John Armstrong, Richard Wyndham, and R. V. Pitchforth; confidently adding those clever young men, Edward Wolfe and Christopher Wood, if they can win free from their French obsession and



LANDSCAPE,

by John Nash, in water-colour (20 in. × 15). Lighting and agreeably selected forms suggest the English countryside far better than any "realistic," leaf-perfect rendering of the same subject

PLATE 54

[*Facing p.* 236

give us more of themselves, less of the Parisian artists.

Not one of these can possibly be called a Cubist, (word no less useful to reactionaries in Art than their beloved " Bolshevik " !). Roberts indeed flirts with tubular shapes, but he is an artist, not a mathematician. The rest, after their own varied fashions, cleave to Nature without copying her. They select the beautiful and the significant—in short, now as ever the true artist finds himself filled with the Greek spirit. Perspective, with its bag of attendant tricks, may come and go, but Beauty will endure for ever : and as Science makes life every year more ugly, will be found increasingly not in mere " like "-ness but in the pure delight of rhythmical design. On these grounds I would confidently recommend the English " Moderns " to any collector with even a modicum of sporting courage.

He will find difficulties. The critics will appal him or dismay with their jargon,—" plastic values," " significant form " and the rest—that they themselves cannot explain. The artists have the narrow mind that goes too often with enthusiasm. Show your Simes to the Moderns and they say icily, " Oh, Sime. . . ." Show your Moderns to Sime, and—but my mind fails to imagine his remark ! Scarcely will you find two artists who admire the work of one another. You had better avoid knowing them, and thus rely on your own judgment. They are, too, timid and conventional. They irritate the seasoned collector of antiques by painting everything in square or oblong frames. Again and again, confronted with my rectilinear big room, suggestive of the Tate, I beg : " Paint a few

ovals or a hexagon or circle : these are gracious shapes." I even wrote an impassioned article, once, in the *Daily Mail*. But all to no avail ! My " antique " rooms are broken by treasures in a score of delicious shapes : my " Modern " room is still a nightmare of straight lines.

Yet what are such minor tragedies of decoration or discouragement when set against the pride of pioneering, the joy of buying works by artists who can still enjoy the encouragement, to say nothing of the cheque ? Here is a new hobby for those who see that the supply of antiques has begun long since to fail : a hobby, too, that will fill their lives most pleasurably. Showers of cards for Private Views will fall each breakfast-time upon their plates. And, so far, the prices are by no means high.

And, finally, let there be no foolish shyness about the collector. It is his job, I say again—it is, in fact, his *justification*,—this salving of what is worth while in every period. Why should he omit his own ? Many a good painter has had to find another job, or (more probably) lower his ideals and paint mere pot-boilers for the market-place, from lack of encouragement and cash. The collector is, we must not let the world forget, an artist. He selects and he creates. He is, in one sense, ignoble though it may be, greater than the artist, for without him there could be no Art. A thousand full-blown dedications of the eighteenth century pay tribute to the old-time patron. Progress and the motor car have very nearly killed that patron. Long live the collector !

THE PLEASANT SHAPES OF ANTIQUE THINGS

Compare this with the rectilinear frames doggedly adopted by our living artists, even if painting a few flowers

PLATE 55

[*Facing p.* 238

CHAPTER XVII

LAST AND FULL CONFESSION

WELL : and what now ?

I have confessed my symptoms, together with their sequels—the waste of time and money, the over-crowded walls, the gradual deterioration into a state of unsocial hermitry. In the course of this alleged confession I have been egotistical and maybe I have boasted.

Has the whole thing,—my life and what I have here written of it—been one colossal folly or even a quite petty sin ? I do not know. No man may tell. I merely know and testify that it has made me happy. And so many men or women seem to me to wear their hobbies sadly, to be actually bored with their amusements.

Memory has brought back to me, since I wrote my first chapter, the actual collection that must have started me upon my chosen path. Lord Wolseley, for whom I have already admitted a youthful idolatry, had written some articles upon Napoleon in the old illustrated *Pall Mall Magazine*. I had them bound in martial red, probably at my sympathetic mother's expense ; and to them I added, on a provided interleaf, all the old portraits, accurate or fanciful in caricature and hidden silhouette, that I could find in those days when antiques abounded and cost almost nothing. Gradually the book bulged and my ardour grew. I bought not only prints that could be stuck in, but larger

engravings that must be framed upon my wall. I bought small bronzes, lacquered boxes, little iron tombs in which a secret Napoleon was found lying deep. My room began to be Napoleonic, even before it moved from Oxford to the wilds of Bayswater. I was slipping, already, into being a collector. Then my father suggested that I ought to show the book to Lord Wolseley, to whom he had been chief-of-staff. I did so at his earliest visit, shyly. That great and kindly man wrote in the front of it :

" I wish these poor articles were worthy of the interesting engravings added to them by my friend Desmond Coke, to illustrate the life of one whom I believe to be the greatest human being of whom we have any record.

" WOLSELEY."

I had made a collection. I had done more. I had created a book of great value in its associations. I had made something that was not there before. In short, I knew myself to be a collector. I was doomed for life. . . .

So the event has proved. But was it a blessing that fell on me then or a disaster ?

If I had been a good boy and stuck close to my chosen career of letters, producing my two yearly novels with the regularity of a well-trained hen, I am immodest enough to believe that I could have made myself far better known that I am to the big reading public. If, instead of rushing round the back streets of our amazing city, I had sat at home and read other people's books, I should have produced a tome far

more learned and factual than this, that I have beaten out from my own bought experience. If I had walked less alone and mixed more with Society, I should have had many more acquaintances—and fewer friends. If I had played Rugger or Cricket every afternoon at Oxford, instead of wandering solitary round that City's fascinating shops, I might be spending my mid-years in the window of a sporting Club, exchanging memories of bygone prowess or boasting of muscles now turned into fat. If I had not spent always a good third of my yearly income on antiques, if I had found some cheaper hobby or sat at home and made day hideous for my neighbours with a badly played piano, I might have worried my Banker and myself less by financial crises. I might have had,—latterly, at least, since Fate smiled on me,—a limousine, a week-end cottage, a wife and a pot-belly.

If—— !

Look at it what way you will, Life remains a problem. That is why, sooner than guess wrongly, most people slide along the line of least resistance. In the end, I think that, if I were allowed three wishes for a child, such as the old Fairy Godmothers gave, I should choose a sense of humour, lending him proportion and greasing the hard places ; a Christian passion to help others, giving him the great joy of Sympathy and putting in his hand a key to the street ; the instinct to collect, providing him with a hobby that would fill each day with interest and grow in intensity till almost his life's end.

Perhaps this baby might not be successful: his humour alone, barring him from the needed pomposity,

would see to that : but he would be immensely happy ; at peace with himself and with the world at large.

Have we not, perhaps, gone far enough with this materialistic fetich of so-called Success ? Educationalists should sit down, before they inflame their boys with that particular ambition, and ask : " Is it in Christ's teaching ? If not, does it bring happiness ? If not, again, what exactly *is* its sanction ? " I pause, as they say, for an answer. I shall not receive it. Educationalists are too over-worked to be able to sit down and think. They have to throw out defensively such easy and worn phrases as " It is wrong to waste time." But time is merely life, for us. How, then, is one intended to spend life ? In one wild dash for money ? What mockery, when Death draws near and tilts up the full money-box that can't be taken ! Society, then ? Clubs ? Speeches ? Paid Publicity ? Marriage ? Family squabbles ? The restful cloister, Life's very negation ? What ? Pause, once again, for that reply ! But now, truly, you are wasting time. You will never get it . . . .

That baby, whom I have imagined, would never read in *Who's What :*

> Became a Fellow of the Loyal Ontological Society on paying ten years' Subscription in advance, 1926 : unanimously elected a member of the Nobodies Thursday Dining Club, 1927 ; was made a Director of the International Universal British Share-Transfer Agency, 1928 : swindled his ten thousandth victim, 1929 : elected sidesman at St. Christopher's, 1929. Clubs : The Good Fellows ; the Nobodies ; the Loyal Ontological. Hobbies : Motoring, night-clubs and Continental travel.

But he would never have a moment to miss these delights. He would choose, being a wise man, some

job that filled his life and yet did not usurp his soul. His free moments would be frequent, but too few. So many antique shops to draw ; so many picture exhibitions to inspect ; so many private views to visit ; so many labellings, mountings, re-hangings, in his own collection !

Lately, at a Film Society performance, I saw a picture, " Berlin," that seemed to me to redeem the Cinema and show what this new Art, strangle-held as yet by the Americans, may still come to be. Just before dawn, one seemed to steam, on an express, through the out-lying suburbs, the poorer slums, the busy districts, right into the centre of this City—steam so dramatically that the lethargic high-brow audience, as the train slowly drew up, burst into a rare round of applause. Berlin we found asleep. A cat moved : nothing more. Then came the vanguard. A sleepy boy dropped newspapers beside a shuttered kiosk ; scavengers began their menial task ; the milk arrived ; the City slowly woke. Shutters were pushed outwards from the humbler houses, even from the little shops. Workmen surged along the street. Even the shops of luxury began to reveal their waxen figures and to deck the windows for to-day's attraction. Clerks and all the business crowd now filled the street. Trams, buses, motor-cars, roared down the street. To maddening insistent music, millions of factory wheels began to whirr. The great world condescended, now, to use the street. Pleasure awoke, late, for them. Twelve o'clock struck, and everything except this last was hushed. The world ate : the richest, the humblest, even the beasts at the Zoo. One o'clock : inferno once again, the wheels,

the machinery, the maddening music . . . . So this great film unrolled, until the human ants set out on their trek homeward, the wax models were hidden once more by gorgeous tasselled blinds, the shutters clanged across a million humbler windows. The day's traffic had ended, with all its tragedies, again. The English critics were left with the *naïve* (and, had they but known, humorous) complaint that this German producer had " shown us nothing of Berlin's gayer side " !

He had not meant to do so. The film had been better called " Futility." It was a sermon that I, for one, am never likely to forget. It also was a work of Art. It got away from the world and showed, as from another star, the inane discordant hustle of our present life : and asked (without ever doing so, for it was Art) *why*, driven by what Fury of the old Greek drama, Man had found himself in this motiveless, nerve-racking, rush, from which, soon he would find no escape : this Frankenstein that he had built with his own hands.

Old things seem to me the only refuge that any human soul can find from this new tyranny. They give leisure, they bring peace. Well enough I know that my walls, fight as I may for my principles, are over-full, risk being fussy : yet again and again visitors have said to me, I need not add unasked, " This room seems to be curiously peaceful " or " What an air of peace you've got somehow in this room " or words to similar effect. It would be easy to become affected and extravagant upon this subject. I shall only say that, after many years of sceptical experience, and being myself one who fears any

traffic with the unknown forces of Occultism (apart from the known tendency to fraud), I am convinced sincerely that old objects, especially those made lovingly with hands, possess their own peace-giving aura. I say further, in full possession (I hope) of my mental faculties, that they do, in some way beyond our understanding, find their way to those who have a special love for them, and settle comfortably beside their fellows. Many will jeer at this, but they are those material, unimaginative people, who thirty years ago, would have jeered equally at Wireless and still disbelieve in the curative powers of Suggestion. I should be tedious if I told even a tenth of my experience in this regard. When I was still young, walking with my mother past Gunn's old shop in Bedford Street (which we had often visited together), I suddenly heard myself say, without knowing why, " Shall we go in and ask if he has any Coke portraits ? " I had never before asked such a question : nor did I ever do such a mad thing again. Mr. Gunn had in his shop a large oil of one of my ancestors. It was authenticated by a long hand-written inscription on the back. Moreover, the man in the portrait wore, at his waist, a key of Office that was in my father's home . . . . And only two years ago, seeing—by no means for the first time—a copy of *Ackermann's Repository* advertised in a book-seller's catalogue, I was seized with a sudden, very poignant, memory of the joy my mother found in such volumes with their coloured views or fashion plates and even their samples of the actual dress-materials worn well over a century ago. Under this strong emotion I sent the twenty-five shillings asked, although I did not

possess a single other volume. When it arrived I fully understood. Gummed in the front of it was an article written by " C. Talbot Coke," my mother, in 1892. The subject was a volume of *Ackermann's Repository :* the title *A Peep Into The Past.* On the top of it was written, in a well-remembered hand, " This is about my volume of the old book, like the one I gave you. Not wanted back. C. T. C." On front of the book was an armorial plate ; " Viscountess Wolseley " ; the plate of my mother's great collector-friend.

Those are two facts, chosen as extreme in time. I could fill the interval with many more.

It would, I say again, be fatally easy to become affected. One more ounce of sentimentality inside me,—or even a few whiskies—and I might be off, full cry, on a fine piece of precious writing. There are the facts, however. Many collectors, I doubt not, could add others like them. Is it so very unlikely, after all, that what we call the spirit, that which must remain when mere bodies decay, should cling lovingly about the objects that it loved and try, by telepathy, to steer them into homes where they will once again find love ? If so, should not these spirits give more peace by their good will than those restless ones which are summoned, unwillingly, to darkened rooms, that they may rap on tables or speak platitudes through trumpets ?

So much for wasted time ! As to that wasted money, I recall frequently the story about Wellington, who bought Wilkie's picture, *Chelsea Pensioners*, from the artist for a thousand guineas. He drew a cheque to Self and paid the artist in bank notes. When

"UN MÊME PENCHANT NOUS UNIT"

Hair-picture, unassisted by paint (2½ in. diameter), French, 18th century

PLATE 56 [*Facing p.* 246

Wilkie said that he would gladly take a cheque, the Duke is alleged to have answered : " Yes, I know ; but I shouldn't like to let my Banker see that I was fool enough to pay a thousand guineas for a picture." That shows humanity in the so-called Iron Duke, never so popular with Britons as the red-flesh Nelson and his Lady Emma. Any collector knows the feeling. How kind our Banker is with his list of Suggested Safe Investments ; how hurriedly we dash off and spend our capital on some alluring picture ; how hard it is, then, to confess !

Probably, however, the other investment was not safe at all. If you bought mazers or mezzotints in 1900, you did far more wisely than if you purchased shares in the many companies floated by financiers now in prison or by others who most certainly ought not to be at large.

Personally, I should never have put by one penny except in the form of antiques. Bank balances I abhor on principle : nor do I ever read the City page. Any Company in which I take shares is automatically doomed. I stick to my existing Investment List, in spite of all intimation that it is scarcely scientific: I put my faith, successfully so far, in the providence that watches over fools.

If it could be remembered of me, at my death, that I loved Beauty and tried modestly to save it from oblivion; that I wrote novels, mediocre indeed but such that they were " all my own work " and could not be docketed as copies of some greater master ; that I gave England a collection, such as could not now be bought, of painted silhouettes by English artists of the

eighteenth century; that I helped her to keep in England the paintings of Rowlandson, a great and very English artist; that I was almost the first English buyer of some English Moderns; I shall not feel, remote and leisure-demanding idiot as I am, that I have failed totally in the career I set myself, not narrowly, of "Art."

Worst perhaps of all Man's many follies, because causing him the most unhappiness and worry, is his morbid tendency to dwell on the future: but if I might close my story for myself, I should wish that presently, neither too soon nor yet too long delayed, there might come upon me that warning instinct of every true collector—to scatter among loved ones the objects he most loved collecting—and that then, before I became tiresome to others, I might, wearied comfortably with my full life and my overwhelming hobby, climb, like her who gave them both to me, peacefully upon my bed and say, in her last words, "Now I want to rest."

THE END.

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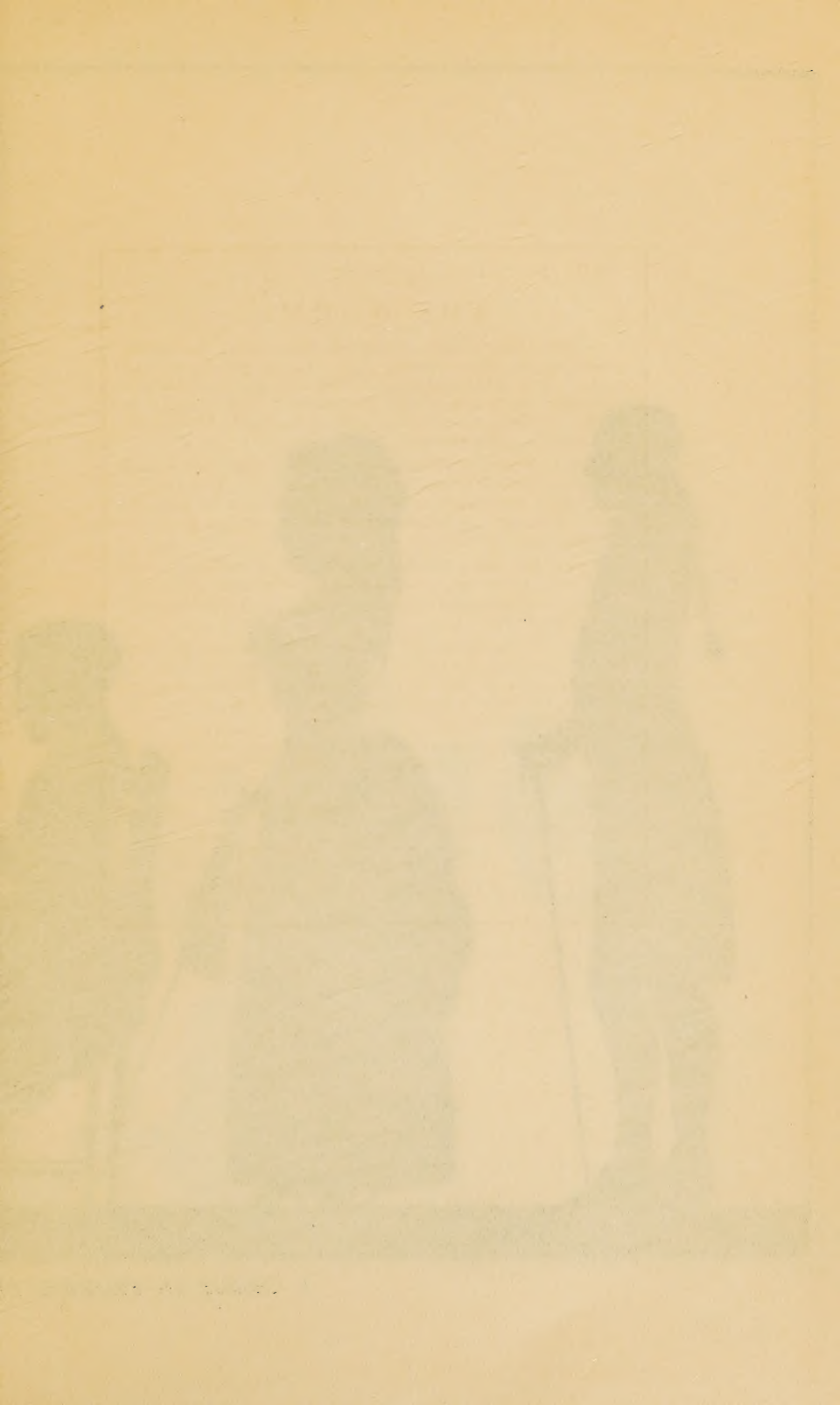

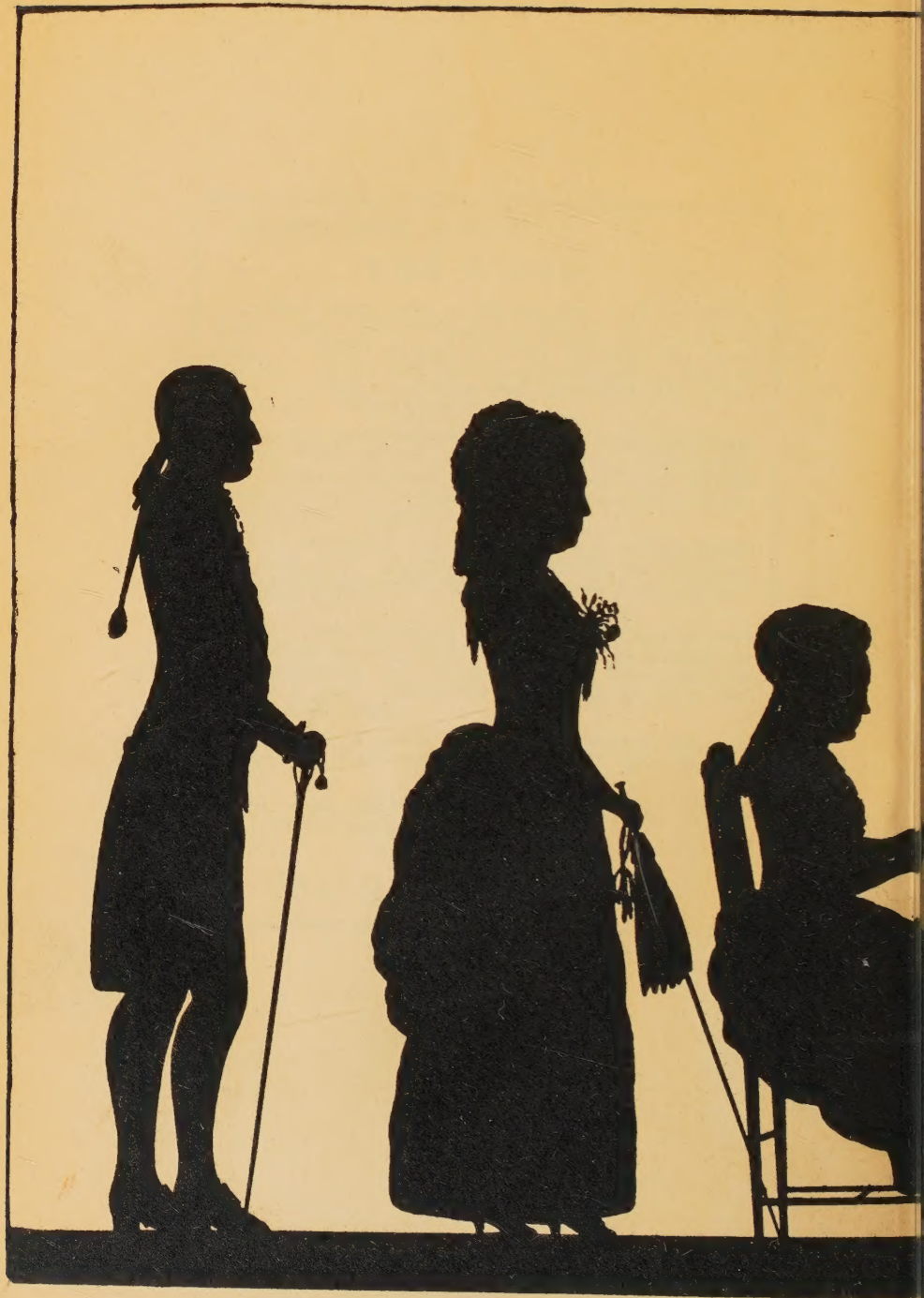

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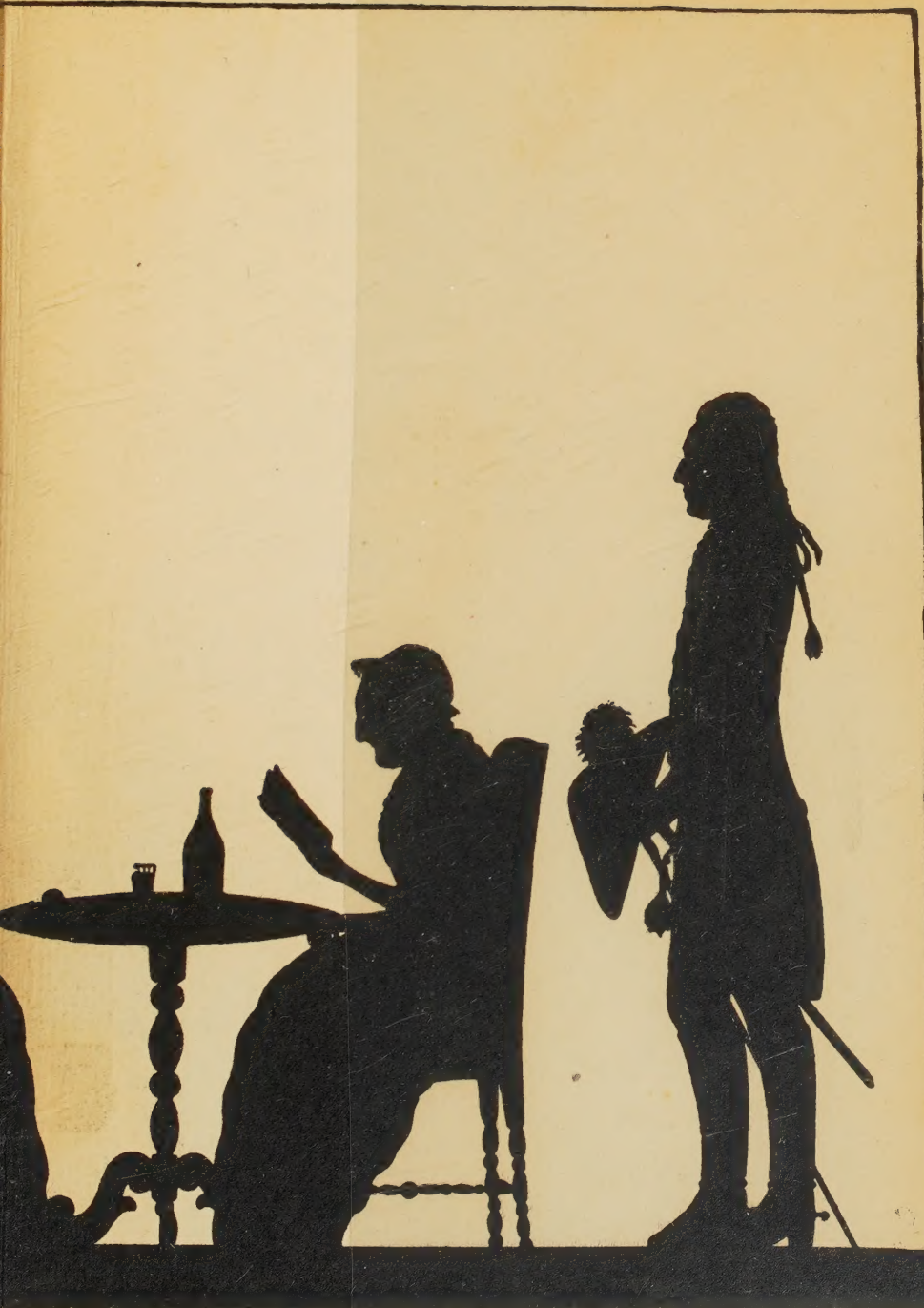

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